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OR, THE

Sable Shadower's Sublime Sacrifice.

The Story of the Counterfeit
Cavalry's Doom.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "BUFFALO BILL" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

WIPE OUT.

"My God! they are killing them!"
The words came from the lips of one

BUFFALO BILL SUDDENLY REINED IN HIS HORSE ON THE VERY EDGE OF THE
BLUFF, AT THE STARTLING SIGHT BEFORE HIM.

who had suddenly ridden to the top of a ridge, which overlooked a beautiful valley.

The scene upon which he gazed was one to sicken the stoutest heart.

The valley was sheltered by wooded hills upon either side, was narrow, fertile, and a stream wound through it. A restful spot, not one to be desecrated by red-handed outrage.

In a clump of timber upon the banks of the stream was a camp. Half a dozen wagons, an ambulance, and buckboard were standing in a semi-circle, the horses and mules, with a few cattle and sheep grazing near by.

The smoke of several campfires floated upward, and about them were people busy with the coming meal, or so had been a few minutes before the scene of death and despair burst upon it.

There were half a dozen negro men and women, several children with ebony faces, and a number of dogs lying near watching the preparations for supper.

At a fire apart was gathered a group of whites.

These consisted of a woman of forty, with a face still beautiful, and stamped with refinement one would hardly expect to find in that wilderness.

A gentleman with iron-gray hair and beard sat near her, while a young girl of thirteen, and a boy of fifteen, were seated not far away, the former engaged in mending some article of wear, the latter cleaning a rifle.

It looked just what it was—a well-to-do emigrant party, going to seek a home beyond the line of civilization and face the dangers and hardships of frontier life.

Suddenly, adown the valley appeared a party of horsemen, and, on the instant, the dogs gave the alarm. All in the camp were upon their feet at once, and weapons were made ready to meet an attack, for no one in that borderland was to be trusted until proven a friend.

But the youth called out:

"They are all right, father, for see! they are soldiers!"

It could be seen, now, that the party of horsemen was in the uniform of cavalrymen of the United States Army, and their horses were in full military equipment.

"There is an officer and twenty-odd men," called out the boy, counting them.

A man, well mounted, and wearing a fatigue uniform, with shoulder straps, a black slouch hat and plume, was in the lead, the others following by twos, and all were coming at an easy canter.

"We must make them our guests for the night, wife," said the leader of the emigrant train, and he called out to the negro women to prepare more food for supper.

The negro men had seized their rifles, but now laid them aside; the dogs were commanded to cease their barking, and all turned to greet the party of horsemen, looked upon as friends, indeed, the brave barriers who stood between the savage Indian and the settler, and ever ready to extend the hand of aid and sympathy.

Nearer and nearer they came, and the leader of the camp stepped forward to greet the officer and bid him and his men welcome.

But, suddenly, without a word of warning, without a greeting, the one who wore the shoulder straps called out to his men:

"You know what to do!"

With the words the leader leveled his revolver full at the heart of the camper and pulled trigger.

The man staggered back, to be greeted with another shot, and he dropped dead, just as a volley of revolver shots rang through the camp, and under the treacherous, deadly fire the woman with the lovely face, the youth, and the negroes, men, women, and children, fell under the merciless hands of those whom they had looked to for protection.

It was true that several of the brave negro men had seized their weapons and opened fire, and two of the horsemen had fallen from their saddles; but the

carnival of death went on, and within five minutes the surprised campers had fallen.

Then the leader and his men dismounted, and then came the cry:

"This girl is not dead! One of you men send a bullet through her brain, for she has only fainted."

"This must be a clean sweep, men—a perfect wipe-out!"

But, not a man moved to obey. There lay the girl, unhurt, as she sank down in a swoon when she saw her father fall.

"Did you hear?" shouted the leader.

"We have done red work enough—she shall not die," cried a man, and the chief wheeled upon him in a fury.

But, at once arose a chorus of voices: "No, she shall not die!"

CHAPTER II.

THE STRANGE WITNESS.

The scene described in the opening chapter is the one witnessed by the man whose words open this story.

The man who uttered them had been following a trail that wound over the range into the valley where the fatal camp was located, and along which the wagon train had gone to its doom.

He was well mounted, his saddle and bridle were of the Mexican pattern and heavy with solid silver ornaments, while his blanket roll revealed that they were serapes of the finest make.

A repeating rifle hung to his saddle horn, a lariat was upon the other side, there was swung under it one of those dangerous sugar cane knives so well known in Louisiana and Cuba, and called there the machete.

With such a weapon a man could hew his way through a dense thicket of underbrush, or the ranks of a regiment.

The horse he rode was a splendid animal, large, gaunt, and spirited, while his glossy hide was as black as jet.

The rider was over six feet in height and built like an athlete, while his movements were quick and decided.

He rode like the perfect horseman he was, and looked fully able to take care of himself in any trouble, and to use the revolvers and bowie in his belt, all of which, along with his rifle and machete, were mounted with silver.

In addition to these weapons named, he carried under his knee, running parallel with his horse, a long and handsomely ornamented bow, a quiver of graceful but deadly arrows hanging to the cantel of his saddle.

Both bow and arrows were painted red and were ornamented with silver.

The man's dress was a black velvet jacket, profusely adorned with silver buttons, pants of velvet stuck in top boots, the latter having massive silver spurs upon them, and a sombrero thoroughly Mexican and ornamented with a silver serpent for a hat-cord, ruby eyes being set in the head, and an eagle of gold with diamond eyes.

The horseman thus gorgeously adorned and thoroughly fitted out was a negro. His face and hands were as black as ebony, in strange contrast to his teeth, that were milk white and even.

His features were not, however, ill formed, for they were clean cut and indicative of intelligence and courage.

The most striking feature about him were his eyes, which were large, the lashes were long, and in their depths dwelt a tenderness and expression that a woman might well wish to possess.

Such was the man who had ridden up to the summit of the range, following the wagon-train trail, and looked down into the beautiful valley and the camp, so picturesque in its restfulness.

He had halted then, as though enjoying the scene, and his eyes had turned from the camp, in its repose, to the coming of the horsemen in uniform.

He had seen the latter ride up to the camp, and then bewildered beyond power of movement, had witnessed the terrible scene that had followed, and which fairly wrung from his lips the words:

"My God! they are killing them!"

After the shock of the discovery was over he settled himself in his saddle, and, seizing his rifle, seemed about to dash down the hill into the camp, and go to the aid of the campers.

But, second thought restrained him, and for two reasons.

The first was that the unequal fight was so soon over, or rather the surprise and massacre, for such it was. The campers had been wiped out in a very few minutes.

The second thought that restrained him was the knowledge that he was only one against a score, and his own death would follow very quickly, he well knew.

Then came the thought that he could live for revenge! If he went into the valley, then he would go to his death. If he kept out of sight he could avenge those whom he would have sacrificed his life to have saved.

Instantly the second thought gained the mastery, and he dragged his horse so hard backward as nearly to throw him over.

In an instant he had gone back into the shelter of the pines.

Leaping to the ground, he hitched his horse and went forward to look down upon the scene. He fairly staggered with weakness as he saw that all was over.

The murderers had not seen him, that was certain, or they would have quickly given chase.

These men of the merciless hand and craven heart wanted no witness to their red deeds, and the Black Horseman would have been pursued to the death.

So he kept out of sight, muttering:

"No, no, they shall not see me—now!"

CHAPTER III.

IN DREAD SUSPENSE.

At the chorus of voices, that the girl should not die, the man who led the uniformed murderers of the emigrants turned fairly upon them and half raised his revolver.

"Did you hear my orders, to shoot that girl?" he said, in a voice that quivered with suppressed passion.

"We heard," came in the voice of all.

"Obey then!"

"No, cap'n, she missed dying with the first fire, and our blood is cooled off now. We won't kill her," answered the one who now spoke for all.

"You refuse?"

"We do."

"Then I shall send a bullet through her heart and deal with you later on for this mutinous spirit."

"It's not intended for mutiny, cap'n, only what we did under the impulse of expecting a hot fight, we won't do when we have cooled off and against a young girl that can do us no harm."

"I'll give the man one hundred dollars who sends a bullet through her heart before she returns to consciousness."

Not a man moved.

"I will give two hundred."

Still no response.

"I will make it three hundred dollars."

The men looked at each other, but there was no movement to obey and win the money.

"I will make it five hundred."

The murderous band of a still more murderous leader moved uneasily and glanced furtively at each other at this offer.

But, they did no more.

Not a word was said.

"This is my last offer, and I mean it."

"I will give one thousand in gold to the man who kills that girl before she recovers her senses."

"Think! She will know nothing of it, and it will be a mercy to her."

The men moved still more uneasily. They looked at each other, as though to see which one would win the prize.

But, not a hand was lowered to the revolver, not one made any movement to obey.

"You do not accept my offer?" said the leader, and as he spoke he drew his revolver.

"Why don't you kill her, cap'n, and save your money?" asked one of the men.

"I will do so," he said, in a low tone, and, as he spoke, his face turned to the hue of death.

At the same moment he turned, revolver in hand, and cocked, toward the girl lying so near him, and who had moved uneasily, as though dreaming a bad dream.

It would be a bold, bad man, indeed, who could send a bullet into that unconscious girl, with her beautiful face and wealth of golden hair.

It would seem to one who had a heart that a hyena even would show mercy to such a picture of girlish innocence.

But, the man had turned as though to carry out his threat.

He held his revolver ready, as one who intended to fire, to send a bullet into the breast of the girl, the sole survivor of that little camp, a few moments before the picture of repose and contentment.

The leader's face was the hue of the dead lying about him, the emigrant, his wife, and young son.

His lips even were white, and yet he was calm and determined as though he meant to carry out his cruel threat.

To gaze upon his face no one would suspect that he was a man without mercy, for he was a man of fine appearance, not over thirty years of age, well formed, handsome in his well-fitting uniform, which his deed of crime had disgraced, and one whose appearance would attract rather than repel.

He was a handsome man, with long, curling brown hair, dark eyes, strangely expressive, and a mustache that was long, and but half shaded a mouth of stern determination.

"Yes, I will kill her," repeated with strange calmness the man whose good face hid a devilish heart.

CHAPTER IV.

NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN.

And the leader raised his revolver as though to carry out his threat.

But, suddenly, as with one thought swaying all, the score of men of the band stepped forward, and, as with one voice, cried:

"No!"

The chief looked at them in amazement.

Was his wish, his will, to be disputed?

"Do you mean to oppose me?" he demanded.

They looked toward one of their number, who understood the look and answered:

"We obey as machines, captain, your every order save one. Look around and see that we have been merciless in what we have done; but you asked too much when you expect one of us to calmly shoot that poor child.

"From the moment we did so, we would bring upon ourselves ill luck; we would be death haunted. So we do refuse, and also, we refuse to allow you to put against your name a blot so foul.

"The girl shall not die, though Heaven knows she will wish that death had come to her, when once she awakens to her unfortunate position."

The man had spoken with perfect calmness, but in a tone that admitted of no argument.

The chief seemed at first as though he intended to break forth in a terrible rage, and he half raised his revolver as if he intended to shoot the man who had so boldly defied him, but, as the spokesman of the band finished what he had to say, the leader responded:

"Camp, I believe you are right. Were the circumstances different, I would tolerate no interference; but she is a mere child, and we need not fear harm from her.

"Save her the emigrant party have been utterly wiped out, and we will adopt her and the past she must forget—yes, she shall be made the Camp Queen, men.

"Camp, you see to her case, while we

discover the result of this wipe-out, for if report is true, we have done the right thing, even though women and children had to suffer."

The chief had yielded gracefully to the humane will of his men, as far as the young girl was concerned.

The man addressed as Camp at once went over to where the girl was lying, and he saw that she was returning to consciousness, so called to the man nearest him to hastily remove the bodies of her parents and brother, and those of the negroes as well.

And back upon the hilltop, his eyes glaring with suppressed hatred, and heart throbbing with deep emotion, crouched the negro who had witnessed the terrible scene.

He knelt there, and his gaze was riveted upon the moving forms. He took from his saddle pouch a field glass and brought it to bear upon the men as they moved about obeying the orders of their chief.

He saw the camp fires rebuilt, as night came on, beheld the form of Camp kneeling by the side of the young girl, the sole survivor of the massacre, and then beheld him lead her away to the tent which had been her mother's and her own.

The negro still watched as the men overhauled the wagons, and as night fell he saw them station a guard on each side, along the trail, and then gather about the camp fire to feast upon the things found in the provision boxes of the emigrants.

Then, under cover of the darkness, he went down the trail into the valley, flanked around to avoid the sentinels and, approaching nearer and nearer, crawling a part of the way, until he reached a clump of pines not a hundred yards away from the camp.

The dogs of the train were crouching apart in a group, terrified at what had occurred, and the efforts of the men to make friends with them had been useless.

But one, a very large and savage-looking brute, left his fellows suddenly, sniffed the air, and went trotting to the clump of pines, and with a low whine lay down close to the crouching negro.

And there the watcher passed several hours, his eyes riveted upon each face as the men appeared before him, until he had them indelibly stamped upon his heart and brain, and felt that they were not to be forgotten.

CHAPTER V.

A MAN IN BUCKSKIN.

What thoughts crowded upon the brain of the lone watcher of the camp of slayers, whose deed so disgraced the uniform they wore, who can tell?

But there he crouched, watching and waiting. Every act of the men came before his gaze, while many words they uttered reached his ears.

Suddenly he turned his head, and listened. The approach of hoofs reached his ears. Some one was coming toward the camp, his horse on a canter.

Then the sound ceased. The guard at the end of the camp evidently had failed to hear the hoof falls.

He paced to and fro in the darkness, until at last he halted, leaped to the shelter of a tree and called out:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

"Friend!" was the answer, in a clear, decided voice.

"Who and what are you?"

"A scout on the way to Fort Fenton."

"Dismount, advance and give the countersign."

The stranger laughed, as the watching negro distinctly heard; then came the reply:

"I cannot give what I do not know."

"My orders are to kill, if my challenge is not obeyed."

"Is this not a camp of United States Cavalry?"

"It is."

"From Fort Fenton?"

"Yes."

"I belong to the service, for I am an army scout, and going to Fenton under orders. Call an officer, sentinel, and I can make him understand."

"Ho, there!"

"What is it?" called out a voice from the camp.

"It is a man who claims to be an army scout, sir," replied the man.

The leader, for he it was who had asked the question, at once advanced toward the sentinel, after giving an order to his men, and called out sternly:

"Who and what are you?"

"An army scout, sir. I have dispatches from Fort Flagstaff to Fort Fenton."

"I saw your camp fire as I passed along the valley trail, and came to you, for I discovered that it was a camp of United States Cavalry."

"Yes, we are U. S. Cavalry. Dismount and advance, that I may have a look at you, for it is necessary to be very cautious after what has happened."

The horseman dismounted, and leading his horse, advanced at a quick step to where the soldier and his captain stood, the former covering him with his rifle.

"Halt!"

The horseman obeyed promptly.

He was within a dozen feet of the sentinel, and as the camp fire flared up brightly he stood partly within its light.

The captain and sentinel stood gazing at him, the former saying:

"I do not know you. You are a stranger at Fort Fenton?"

"Yes, sir. I am Chief of Scouts at Flagstaff, and have not been to Fort Fenton for several years. But I bear dispatches there now, and in haste, but would like a short halt for rest with you, sir, and a bite to eat."

"You are welcome. Advance!"

This much the negro crouching amid the group of scrub pines heard, and he saw the stranger advance and then walk with the captain toward the campfire, after staking his horse out near the sentinel.

He saw the captain lead the stranger up to the camp fire and the men arise to receive him.

But he could not hear what passed, though the sound of voices reached his ears.

As he stood there in the firelight, the stranger was distinctly visible to the negro, who brought his field glass to bear upon him.

He saw a man well above the ordinary height, with massive chest, broad shoulders, and erect as an Indian.

He was dressed in fringed buckskin leggings, a hunting coat of the same material, embroidered with porcupine quills and beads of varied colors, and wearing a light, broad-brimmed slouch hat that was set jauntily upon one side of his head.

His hair was black and long, falling below his shoulders, and he wore an imperial and mustache that gave him a military appearance.

Altogether, clad as he was in buckskin, even to moccasins, he was a most striking and picturesque person in appearance.

Though he was so far off from the negro, the glass further revealed that the man in buckskin had a strikingly handsome face, with large eyes, full of expression, and daring and determination stamped upon every feature.

He looked just what he was, a splendid specimen of manhood, one of Nature's truest noblemen, ready to do and die in a cause he deemed right.

"I wonder who that man in buckskin is?" muttered the negro, greatly impressed by his presence.

And the slayers about the camp fire wondered the same thing, but soon found out.

CHAPTER VI.

RECOGNIZED.

The stranger in buckskin cast a sweeping eye over the men gathered about the campfire.

To his view they appeared to be what their appearance indicated, a party of cavalry out on a scout after Indians or outlaws.

But there were other things that caught the eye of the visitor, and these were the wagons, ambulances, and camping outfit of the murdered emigrants.

There was the tent erected for the mother and her daughter, and in it lay the young girl, who had wept herself to sleep, after she returned to consciousness and knew what had happened, or had heard the story of the man Camp, who had saved her life.

And, strange to say, whatever that story was she had, in her great grief, believed it.

But the visitor did not just seem to understand the party of soldiers being in the camp of a wagon train, and no emigrants about to speak for themselves.

The dead had already been buried, and none of the stains and sights of the cruel massacre remained visible to the ordinary glance.

The look of the stranger, however, caused one of the men to rise and leave the campfire, but before he did so he had given his chief a look that he seemed to understand, for he quickly followed him.

A short distance away the man awaited his chief, and the two engaged in a low, earnest conversation for a few minutes.

The man was Camp, and what he said seemed to impress the chief, for he quickly returned to the campfire, where supper was being prepared for the stranger, and said, somewhat eagerly.

"I am certainly very glad that you have come, for I have a most terrible story for you to carry on to Fort Fenton."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes. We were most particular about you to-night, as we had just passed through a tragic scene which I must tell you about."

"But, have you any papers to show who you are, as I care to make no mistake, sir."

The stranger smiled and replied:

"I failed to recognize any men of your command, captain, whom I had seen before, so have no one to introduce me; but I have dispatches, sir, and I will show you them, sealed and addressed to the commandant of Fort Fenton, Colonel Webster Waring, and the stranger drew out from an inner pocket a large oilskin wallet, in which were several sealed envelopes."

These he held so that the captain could read the address, which was as follows:

"To

"Colonel Webster Waring,

"Fort Fenton.

"By hand of Chief of Scouts William F. Cody—Buffalo Bill."

The captain glanced at the address and at once extending his hand, said eagerly:

"What? Can it be possible that I have as my guest the renowned plainsman, Buffalo Bill?"

"My pards so call me, sir," was the modest rejoinder.

The men at once gazed upon the noted scout with greatly increased interest.

They felt that they were in the presence of a man whose deeds of daring, whose life of wonderful adventure, and services untold to the army and frontier settlements, had made his name known the world over.

They gazed upon his splendid face, his carriage, so conscious of his power, yet modest withal, and felt that he was just the man to do and dare all that he had been credited with.

They knew that his name was dear in every border home, that he was the idol of the army, the terror of hostile Indians, and of evil doers, and they were quiet to almost awe in his presence.

"I told you so, sir," whispered Camp to his captain, for he had returned and stood at his elbow.

But the captain did not appear to be exactly elated over the discovery he had

made. He rather appeared like a man who had an unpleasant duty to perform. His manner of warmth toward the great scout seemed forced. But, he was going to make the best of a very bad situation, as he considered it, for himself and men.

So he said with assumed frankness:

"Well, sir, it is an honor, indeed, to have for a guest one of whom I have heard so often, and who has won such deserved fame for himself."

"I have, Mr. Cody, no hesitation in telling you, now that I know who you are, the very sad story that will account for our being here, in the camp of a party of unfortunate emigrants."

"But, eat your supper, sir, for it is ready, while I tell you a very sad tale of woe and bloodshed."

The scout's face showed no emotion to reveal what he thought, and he quietly set to work upon his supper.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT WAS TOLD BUFFALO BILL.

"It is a very sad story that I have to tell, Chief Cody," began the captain, as Buffalo Bill finished his supper and quietly lighted his pipe to listen, feeling convinced, from what he had seen and heard thus far that something had gone wrong in the camp, though just what it was he had not been able to discover.

"You know, I suppose, that emigrants have been pushing their way out here, lured by the rumor that gold had been found in large quantities?"

"I had heard that gold had been discovered in these mountains, but I knew that the Government did not allow any immigration here, as the lands had not been thrown open and the danger from Indian massacres was great."

"That is just it, but there are fool-hardy men who not only will persist in coming here, but even in bringing with them their wives and children in some cases."

"They take desperate risks, sir, as far as I know; but I have heard but little of the country adjacent to Fort Fenton since I scouted here years ago."

"That they do take desperate risks, Chief Cody, this wagon train stands as a painful proof, for its people were one and all massacred not two hours ago."

"My God!"

"Can this be true?" cried Cody, his usually calm manner excited by what he had heard.

"It is, alas, too true. I was scouting, as I told you, not only to hunt for Indians, but also to drive back any wagon trains or gold hunters I might come upon, while I also had orders to guard the stage lines from any bands of outlaws."

"I understand, sir."

"It was just nearing sunset, when I heard firing, as we were coming to this spot to camp, and we dashed forward to the rescue."

"But, we were too late, for the Indians, in considerable force, were just finishing their red work upon an emigrant, his family, and a party of negroes who came with him."

"Did they surprise the camp?"

"Beyond a doubt."

"What force had the emigrants, sir?"

"A man, his wife, daughter, and son, with five negro men, four women, and half a dozen children."

"And the Indians wiped them all out, captain?"

"Yes, but our charge saved the train and the bodies from mutilation."

"The bodies have been buried, and I intended to start with the train at dawn for Fort Fenton, which, you know, is nearly a hundred miles away."

"Yes, sir, all of that by the stage trail."

"But, Chief Cody, as I cannot spare a man, several of my men being wounded, and fearing the Indians may return in force, I am going to ask you, as you are on your way to Fenton, to continue on to-night and inform Colonel Waring of what has happened, at the same time asking him to send a force to my aid."

"I will go with pleasure, Captain—"

"My name is Warburton, Wallace Warburton, Mr. Cody."

"I have heard of you, sir—if I mistake not, you and your command were believed to have been massacred some time ago, and I had heard no reports to the contrary."

"Yes, but we were corralled until we could escape from the Indians who besieged us."

"You were fortunate, sir. But I will start at once for the fort, and deliver your message to Colonel Waring."

"Do not hurry off before you and your horse are well rested, for you will be able to reach there to-morrow afternoon."

"Hardly, sir, as my horse is very tired, but by night I can get there, at least."

"I am sorry our horses are in no better condition, or I would offer you one in place of yours."

"No, thank you, mine will get me there all right, only I can not push him hard, captain."

"I will start soon, sir, and take it quietly."

"If a force starts from the fort by dawn the next day, it will be time, for I shall hold this position until help comes, as I dare not move out with the wagons."

"It would be best, sir, to remain here, as if the Indians know your numbers, and they have other bands within call, they may come back and attack you."

"That is what I fear, if I move from here."

"May I suggest, sir, that you put out extra sentinels, for two are not sufficient?"

"I will do so at once. But I wish you to tell Colonel Waring that my belief is that this wagon train came up from the south, as the negroes with it seem to prove; but when I examine the effects of the leader, I will doubtless discover all about them."

"I will tell him, sir. And now, as I have had a good supper, and am well rested, I'll pull out for Fenton, and get help to you as soon as I possibly can," and as Buffalo Bill walked to where he had left his horse, he was accompanied by the captain, who warmly shook hands with him as he bade him good-night, and a safe ride to Fort Fenton.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WATCHER.

Still crouching in the pine thicket, the negro had seen the welcome of the horseman into the camp, and had watched the scene about the fire, and all that took place there.

He could not hear what was said, though he tried hard to do so, but the distance was too far for that.

After quite a long stay in camp, Buffalo Bill was seen to rise and depart, to the great surprise of the negro, who had supposed that he would remain all night.

Had he anticipated the departure of the scout, he would have gone ahead on his trail and had a talk with him.

Of course, he did not know who the scout was, but he had seen enough to know that he was not one of the band in the camp, whoever they might be.

The black watcher was the more amazed that men in the uniform of United States soldiers could be guilty of so murderous a deed as he had seen these men commit.

He saw that the captain of the band did not show the scout about the camp, and he escorted him to his picket line when he took his departure.

From where he was in hiding the negro could readily have killed the captain with his rifle.

But he did not make the attempt to do so, though he muttered imprecations upon the man as he gazed upon him.

When he saw the scout ride away, and knew that it would be impossible for him to overtake him, the sable shadower turned his attention again to the camp.

He observed the captain return to the fire, and then he was surprised to

see that he gave orders that at once brought all the men to their feet.

What those orders were he did not know, but, watching every movement he saw the men drive in the cattle and begin to harness the mules and horses.

The fires were brightened up to give light, and the men worked hard and rapidly.

Evidently a move was to be made, and quickly.

Soon the mules were hitched to the wagons, the horses to the ambulances, and the cattle herded together for a start.

The cavalymen had saddled up, and when all was in readiness for a start, the train pulled out of camp, the horsemen driving the cattle and forming a guard for the wagons.

The negro gazed on with amazement. He could not understand the sudden move.

Surely the horsemen had expected to camp all night upon the scene of the appalling tragedy they had enacted there.

But now they left the dread scene with a suddenness that apparently showed fear of some foes appearing, to the negro unknown.

They hastily stole away, as though afraid of the spectres that must haunt them there.

Watching the scene, the negro had seen them strike the tent, and it seemed that some one was taken from it and placed in an ambulance; but, of this he was not sure.

Had the coming and going of the Horseman in Buckskin aught to do with the sudden flight of the campers, for flight it certainly seemed?

The negro asked himself this question again and again.

At last he came to the conclusion that the scout's coming to the camp had caused the quick going following his departure.

Then he again felt sorry he had not been able to speak to the horseman, whose striking appearance had greatly impressed him.

"I will know him, no matter where I meet him again," he muttered.

Extremely cautious in what he did, the negro did not go to the camp as soon as the campers left. He waited until he saw them disappear in the darkness, and then listened as long as he could hear the sound of voices driving the cattle or the rumble of the wheels.

The train had gone back over the very trail it had come to that fatal valley, and here the negro was again surprised.

The camp was as silent as the dead, save for the crackling of the burning logs, and suddenly the negro beheld something moving about among the trees.

Instantly he knew that it was a pack of skulking coyotes, looking for the refuse left in camp.

That reminded him of his horse, left alone on the range, and at a swift trot he started on his way there. He soon reached the range, to find his horse growing very uneasy, as a pack of coyotes were about him, hoping for a feast, and only fearful of their mortal enemy, man, being near, or they would have attacked the lone animal.

CHAPTER IX.

A MISSING FORM.

Mounting his horse, the negro rode along the range to the trail, and listened attentively to see if he could catch the sound of the retreating train.

Afar off he heard voices, and then came to his ears a sound that was not made by the wagon wheels upon the hard soil of the plain. He listened with the most acute attention and said:

"I believe they are going up or down that shallow stream that crosses the plain several miles from here."

He recalled that the plain back over the trail was an almost barren waste, and that a sandy stream ran across it, only a foot in depth.

The stream was not over fifty yards

wide, and the train would have quickly crossed it; but, instead of the sound of crossing, he heard the splashing of water, as though the whole train was being driven up the stream.

"If it was going down with the swift current, the splashing would not be near as loud. No, they are going up that stream, and I guess they can follow it for miles, and that means they are trying to hide their trail," he mused.

"It's a big trail to hide, that I know, and I am sure they have gone up, so I'll not be at a fault to find them," he added, after listening awhile longer.

It was a clear night, perfectly calm, and the splashing of the water came to his ears distinctly, though the stream was miles away.

But a hundred horses and more, as many cattle, and half a dozen wagons could not stem a shallow, swiftly flowing stream without making a great deal of noise.

Satisfied that the trail could not be covered up beyond his finding, in the daylight, the sable shadower waited until he was sure the train had turned to the right at the stream, and then set out for the fatal camp.

He rode rapidly, and, dashing into the timber, scattered half a hundred coyotes that were prowling there.

Dismounting, he staked his horse out, threw more wood upon the three fires that were yet burning briskly, to light up the entire camp, and then began to look about him.

The firelight made the whole little grove of timber visible, and over in the densest part he beheld where the fresh earth had been turned up in mounds, the shape of which can never be mistaken.

Taking off his slouch hat, he approached the spot slowly, and with bowed head. Soon he stood amid the clump of cedars, where the dead had been buried by their slayers.

He saw that there was one large grave and two smaller ones. The assassins had gone their own way about burying the dead.

Suddenly the eyes of the negro fell upon some object glimmering in the firelight. He stepped toward it and discovered a shovel standing against a tree, and a spade and pick were lying near upon the ground. The slayers had left some of their tools, or, rather, left some of those they had taken from the wagons.

The man seized the shovel and began work upon the smaller grave. He worked with fierce energy, for a few minutes—then more gently, for he was nearing the bodies.

In a brief time three bodies, wrapped in blankets, were exposed.

The muscular black raised them gently from the grave, and unfolding the blankets, saw that the three dead were the leader of the emigrant train, his wife, and son.

"Poor, poor Mars Donald, and Miss Arma and little Herbert—they are dead, dead!" moaned the negro, and great tears rolled down his cheeks and dropped upon the upturned faces, while his whole form quivered with emotion.

Suddenly he started and fairly shouted:

"But, where is Missy Myrtle? Here is her pa and ma and Herbert; but where is she?"

"Maybe she is buried in the grave with my poor old daddy and mammy."

"Maybe they didn't kill her?"

The thought seemed to terrify him even more than had the young girl been slain, and great beads of sweat burst out anew upon his black face.

Again he grasped the spade, and set to work upon the larger grave.

In time the bodies came in view, and these, too, were wrapped in blankets.

The graves were opened, the bodies all lay in the glare of the firelight, while the coyotes whined and howled dismally a short distance off—but the body of Myrtle was not there.

CHAPTER X.

THE VOW OF VENGEANCE.

The negro seemed dazed at the discovery he had made. He looked over the bodies again and again, for the missing form of the young girl; then he ran rapidly all over the camp, hoping to find the young girl, or her body.

But all in vain; she was not there, dead or alive.

Returning to the graves, he saw that the bold and hungry coyotes had dared to rush close up to the dead. Then his revolvers began to rattle, and every shot told.

The coyotes scattered with angry yelps, and the negro stood like a statue gazing down upon the dead, and for a long while uttered no word; only a low moan would now and then force itself between his lips.

At last he said:

"My poor mammy, my poor old daddy! They have gone forever. And my little brother, and sister, too; and Aunt Jane, and Uncle Joe, and Tom, and Dinah, and Jack, and Melinda, and—oh, Lord, have mercy on me! They are all gone!"

"Yes, master, and missis, Herbert, and all my own people lie dead right here before me, all save Missy Myrtle, and the good God help her!"

"It was a sad day when we left the old ranch in Texas to come out into this wild land. Yet Mars' Donald thought he was doing right, that a fortune was before us all, for had we not come together, he and I, and found—sh! I must not say it, even here!"

"But, this is the end of their trail, and mine only begins here."

"Oh, my Lord! it is hard for me to stand and see them all lie dead here before me."

"No! no! not all, for where is Missy Myrtle?"

"I would rather she lay dead here with her pa and ma and brother, with all my people, than to be a prisoner to those devils that I saw kill and kill."

"Why did I not run down here and share their fate? It was not because I was afraid. Oh, no! it was because something held me back, and a hand seemed to be upon my heart, and a voice saying: 'No! no! no! You live on to avenge them.'"

"Well, they are dead and I live. If I did not feel that I could avenge them I believe I'd go mad right here."

"And more; I must find out about Missy Myrtle. Is she dead? Is she alive? Was it Missy Myrtle I saw them take from the tent and put in the ambulance? I must know; yes, I will know!"

"But, I must bury my dead, for they are all mine. Did not my mammy nurse Mars' Donald when he was a little child, and has he not cared for my people, all of us, as he has for his own?"

"Were we not, Mars' Donald and me, up in this wild country together for one long year? and did he not find—but I must not even think about that."

"Now I must keep those coyotes away from my dead people, and then I will know what has happened to little Missy Myrtle."

With this he began to place the dead again in their graves, and with deepest reverence to all.

He folded the bodies in their blankets, spread armfuls of pine straw over them, then filled in the dirt solidly, and brought logs and rocks to pile upon the mounds and thus protect them from being dug open by the sharp claws of the wild beasts.

When at last his task was completed, the dawn was just beginning to brighten the eastern horizon.

He had thus far shown no fatigue, his iron frame seeming proof against it.

His nerve, too, had kept up, and he had been the strong man to bear up under his terrible affliction.

But now he dropped down upon his knees and, raising his clasped hands toward Heaven, he cried in a loud voice for God to witness his vow to avenge his dead.

A moment of silence succeeded, after he had registered his vow on high, and then with a low moan he dropped forward upon the graves, like one in a swoon.

At last even his giant form and nerves of steel had succumbed to the terrible strain upon him, and he really had swooned, almost appearing to have fallen dead.

And at his fall a great yelp of joy went up from the cowardly pack of coyotes, and with glittering teeth and vicious whines they began to move forward to pounce upon the form of the noble negro.

CHAPTER XI.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

Disappointed of their feast upon the dead, the coyotes had worked up their courage to a point where they were willing to risk running in upon the negro, as soon as he had fallen in a swoon.

Most cowardly creatures by nature, they are cunning as the fox, and will attack a foe only when they see that he is helpless.

Their number had now increased until there were over half a hundred of them, but the brightening of day cowed them to move cautiously to the attack.

It also revealed to a friend of the fallen negro the situation of affairs, the danger he was in.

That friend was his devoted dumb pard, his horse!

The horse had heard the voice of his master, as it was raised in registering his vow before Heaven. He had quit feeding, turned his gaze upon his master, saw him fall, and at once began to pull at his stake pin to free himself.

A loud neigh was given, to arouse the negro. He seemed not to know what to do, and went at a gallop at the end of his rope around and around the stake, all the while neighing loudly. The pull on the pin soon loosened it in the ground, and in a moment more it came out under the strain on lariat. Thus freed, the sagacious beast went at a run straight for the prostrate form of his master.

The coyotes were almost upon him, and but for the coming of the horse would have made the fatal rush upon the unconscious man.

The horse's coming put them to flight, and they scattered to a hundred yards' distance, and there halted.

The horse halted by his master, with a low, whinny began to press his nose against the black face.

The touch of the cold nose or the hot breath in his face seemed to revive the negro, for he moved; his hand went up and rested on the head of the sagacious beast.

A moment more and he arose to a sitting posture, then to his feet, though with an effort, and a quick glance about him showed him the situation.

Instantly he put his strong arms about the neck of his horse and thus stood, while his whole form trembled.

Quickly recovering himself, however, he said:

"Good old pard, I've got one friend left, at least! And you have saved my life, that I know, for I must have fallen in a faint. But you kept those cowardly coyotes off, and never again will I stake you out, or hitch you, for I can trust you to stay near me, I know."

"But, come, old pard! There is work for us to do. We must find Missy Myrtle, and—well, what is before us we do not know."

CHAPTER XII.

THE BLACK TRAILER.

The negro now realized that he needed food, for since the morning before he had eaten nothing; so he set to work to get breakfast, for he had his bag of provisions with him, but was glad to find that in the darkness the large chest containing the supplies of Mr. Ellis and his family had been left behind.

There were hams, sides of bacon, a

bag of flour, coffee, sugar, cans of lard, crackers, and other things, just what he needed and fully enough to last him for a couple of months, at least, if he could only carry them with him.

But, luck seemed to come his way that morning, as a balm for all he had suffered for his horse gave a snort, and, looking up from his cooking, the negro saw a second horse coming toward him.

The animal was a good one, and had a pack saddle upon his back, the negro recognizing him as one of the best animals in the outfit. The Black Trailer at once decided that he had run off before he had been unsaddled, as was frequently the case, and had been left to return at will by the campers.

The horse he knew carried the blankets and painted canvas shelter of Mr. Ellis and his son, with an extra rifle, ammunition, clothing, and other useful articles.

"Well, this is a good find!" said the negro, as he walked toward the horse and caught him without difficulty.

Examining the pack saddle, as he pulled it off, the negro was glad to find in it a shotgun, as well as a rifle; a heavy storm coat and cloak belonging to Mr. Ellis, a couple of rubber blankets, some cooking utensils, plenty of ammunition, and much else that he would find most useful.

Having had his breakfast, he lay down to sleep for an hour or two, while the horses fed near him.

He well knew that his horse would give him a warning of any danger, and yet he could but regret that the large dog belonging to the camp, and which had sought him out in the pines as he watched, had again disappeared, doubtless following the wagons.

"If I only had 'Terror' with me, I'd never need fear danger," he muttered, referring to the large dog that he knew to be such a splendid camp guard.

In a few seconds the negro was sleeping soundly, and for a couple of hours he did not move, for the yelping and snarling of the coyotes did not disturb him in the least.

But, suddenly, he sprang to his feet in alarm, as the loud barking of a dog fell on his ears, and up dashed Terror, the coyotes scattering quickly, as though from a mountain lion.

The dog was barking with joy as he beheld the negro, and had evidently followed the wagons, but, finding no friendly form at daylight, had come back to look up the black.

Affectionately did the negro pat the head of the dumb brute whom he had longed for. He gave him some breakfast, for he saw that he was gaunt and hungry, appearing as though he had had a long and hard run of it.

While the dog rested, the negro began to saddle up the horses for a start. Upon the pack animal he put all he did not care to weight his own horse down with.

Then, with a visit to the graves, where he stood with uncovered head and tear-dimmed eyes for some time, he mounted his horse, and, with the pack animal in lead, was ready to start.

"Which way, Terror?" he asked the dog.

Terror responded with a glad yelp, and started off on the trail of the wagons! In fact, he would have gone on if not recalled by the negro, who muttered:

"The dog would have decided for me, had I not already done so. Yes, Terror; we go on after the wagons, not to find friends, but foes. Yes, our duty lies that way, old dog."

Back over the trail he went, up to the summit of the range, there to suddenly halt.

What he saw at first puzzled him, but, after watching for awhile, he seemed to comprehend the situation.

Down on the plain, having just crossed the stream, he beheld a large herd of buffalo.

They had been run hard, and driven along the plain beyond to the trail crossing of the stream.

Behind them were those who had driven them—half a score of horsemen.

Bringing his glass into requisition, the negro saw that they wore a uniform and military equipments, in fact, were a part of the band that had attacked the camp the afternoon before.

As he watched them, he saw them cross the stream, round up the large herd, and start them directly back over the trail they had come.

As the buffalo went off at a lope over the trail once more, the horsemen did not follow, but turned up the stream, following the bed.

"Now I know their game. They took the wagons that way last night, and, wishing to destroy all traces of a trail, a part of the band went off to look up that herd of buffalo."

"Finding them, they drove them over the trail, to destroy all tracks beyond the stream, and then rounding them up, sent them back over it once more."

"This will give the idea to any one who may track them—that fine-looking man I saw last night, for instance—that the wagons had started back out of the country. It is a clever trick, but I see through it."

"I cannot see why United States soldiers have done what those men did, for what could they have supposed Mars' Donald Ellis and his people to be?"

"But, soldiers or not, I know their faces, and my vow to avenge those I loved is written on High!"

"Come, Terror, we will follow on the trail as soon as they get out of sight."

And the Black Trailer then commenced his Pilgrimage of Vengeance.

CHAPTER XIII.

A RALLY TO THE RESCUE.

Buffalo Bill rode away from the camp in the valley, bound upon his double mission, and sad at heart as he thought of the pitiful story he had to tell Colonel Waring of the massacre of the train people.

He was well mounted, but his horse had had a long trail, and was tired, as he had said to Captain Warburton.

Still, he was not one to spare either himself or his horse when there was work to be done, and he had a dread that the campers might again be attacked by Indians in larger force, for he had no reason to doubt the story told him.

It being night, too, he could not see for himself traces that would have been clear enough by daylight to his experienced eye.

"I will reach the fort in time to start a relief party out before night, certainly before dawn," he muttered.

Then he fell to musing aloud, as was his wont, and said:

"It is so strange that men will come into these wilds as they do, risking life for gold continually."

"They well know that the Government forbids it, and that if the soldiers see them they will turn them back, or put them under arrest, while they are aware that the Indians are ever ready to attack and massacre them."

"But still they come."

"I can understand a band of men taking the chances to come here and hunt for gold, risky as it is, even for a large and well-armed party, but do not comprehend why they will risk the lives of those they love, wives, daughters, and others."

"Now, that whole train was wiped out, Captain Warburton said, and but for his arrival there would have been no trace of anything left of the outfit to tell who and what they were."

"Captain Warburton is no doubt a brave man and able officer, but somehow I did not take a fancy to him."

"He did not tell me whether he had been back to Fort Fenton since his having been reported massacred with all his men, in fact, he told but little of anything, I thought."

"I take it that he is just on his way back to the fort after his long absence."

and if I am not mistaken my being sent to Fort Fenton with dispatches is partly to have had me look up his command.

"Well, if so, I have found them."

After riding for several hours at a fairly brisk pace, Buffalo Bill looked about for a camping place, and soon found it on a stream under the shelter of a high cliff, and where there was plenty of grass and wood.

He unsaddled his horse and staked him out to feed and rest, and, wrapping himself in his blankets, the scout was soon fast asleep.

Two hours refreshed him greatly, day was breaking, and, building a fire, he soon had a good breakfast ready.

He had just mounted to continue on his way when he heard the rapid clatter of hoofs coming down the trail that led down the stream upon the other side.

At once he was on his guard, his rifle in hand, and, drawing back to the shelter of the cliff, stood ready to face whatever he was called upon to do.

A moment's listening convinced him that one horse was considerably ahead of others, and doubtless was being pursued by them.

Who and what could it be?

The hooffalls told him that there were all of a score of horses, and his quick ear detected that there was no ring of iron-shod hoofs, so the animals must be Indian ponies, and hence with redskin riders.

Naturally, he supposed that they must be in chase of a white man, perhaps a scout from the fort.

By a rapid run Buffalo Bill might have gained a hiding place, but then he might by doing so run away from some one who needed his aid.

Then, the trail the horses were coming on was the one that led to Fort Fenton, hence the one he was to take.

At the cliff there was a small canyon, filled with cedars, and here he could stand at bay.

So the scout sat upon his horse and awaited the outcome, whatever it should be.

Nearer and nearer came the rapid hoof-falls, and then there was heard, one, two, three shots in quick succession.

These were followed by a demoniacal yell from redskin throats. Who were the Indians in pursuit of?

Another minute and around a bend in the trail came a horse and rider; but the sight of the rider was fairly startling to Buffalo Bill, who gazed upon him with almost awe, as he urged on his horse, which was staggering from weakness from a couple of wounds he had received.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DOUBLE RETREAT.

The horse and rider that came into full view of Buffalo Bill were certainly enough to rivet the attention of any one.

The animal was long-bodied, gaunt as a hound, white, and had no saddle or bridle, or, rather, the former was a huge bearskin strapped upon his back.

The horse was bleeding freely from a wound in his neck and another in his flank, and began to stagger as he sped along, having evidently received a mortal blow.

An Indian arrow was also sticking in his hip, and the animal's strength was nearly gone.

But the rider?

At first Buffalo Bill believed that it was a grizzly bear riding horseback.

But a close look revealed a human form clad in the skin of a grizzly bear from neck to feet, while a cap of white feathers sheltered his head.

This attire, with a long black beard and hair falling below his shoulders, made up a most striking picture.

In one hand the strange rider carried a rifle, but no other weapon was then visible.

As he came on he turned and glanced behind him, and just then there dashed into view a dozen or more Indians.

At the same moment a shower of ar-

rows and several bullets came flying after the mysterious fugitive, and down went his horse, with such suddenness that he caught the leg of his rider under him, thus pinning him to the ground.

Buffalo Bill waited to see no more.

A white man was in deadly peril, and to save life the scout was not a man to count odds.

Into the stream he dashed, across to the other side he was in an instant, and leaping to the ground, with an exhibition of his phenomenal strength, he had dragged the dead horse off of his imprisoned rider.

Without waiting to see if he was badly hurt or to aid him to rise, Buffalo Bill sprang into his saddle, and, spurring behind the shelter of a huge boulder, he leveled his repeating rifle over it and began to fire.

In spite of the Indians being in such number, a score to one, as he saw now, and then coming on with a rush, he did not fire at random, but with deadly aim and slowly.

One, two, three flashed the rifle, and the leaden messengers of death continued to stream out of the muzzle, until a dozen shots had been fired.

Against such a galling fire the Indians would not ride, for a warrior dropped dead from his saddle, a pony went down, and so it went on until the others wheeled and sped to the shelter of the bend around which they came.

Three braves and four ponies, however, lay where they had fallen, and Buffalo Bill, grim and determined, rapidly reloaded his rifle.

He had been surprised that the man whose life he had saved had not also fired.

Had he been too much hurt by his fall, he wondered.

With rifle loaded he turned to look for the strange man.

There lay his horse, just where the scout had dragged him off of his rider.

But the rider was not visible.

Where was he?

"He has doubtless gotten into some shelter, and may be badly hurt," muttered the scout, and he added:

"I hope not, for this is no place to be caught with a wounded man upon my hands."

Quickly he searched about for him, but nowhere could find the man.

Suddenly he heard a call.

It seemed to come from above him.

Glancing over the stream, to the cliff, the scout beheld the stranger in the grizzly bearskin.

The shout had evidently been uttered by the man, but he now said not a word, but waved his hand in silence, as though in farewell, and, turning, disappeared from the scout's sight.

"Well, he has taken care of himself, that is certain, so I will do the same," muttered the scout, surprised at the strange conduct of the man.

With this he sheltered himself among the pines, and rode down the stream, for he felt sure the Indians were arranging to creep upon his position.

He gained a place of shelter without discovery, and then flanked around through a valley to reach the trail beyond the Indians and continue on his way once more.

As he got to an open space where he could see the cliff, he suddenly beheld the same strangely robed form appear on the top, level his rifle and fire downward, as though aiming near the spot he had left a short while before.

Then there was heard a wild yell, shots, and the grizzly-robed form disappeared.

"Well, he did not run off after all, but once he was safe, remained there to watch the Indians and fire on them."

"He surely saw me leave, so both of us are all right now, for those Indians will remain quiet for awhile, until they discover I am gone, and then study up some other deviltry."

"But now to regain the trail, and then hasten to the fort," and Buffalo Bill continued on up the valley.

CHAPTER XV.

A LIFE CHASE.

Buffalo Bill regained the trail, but at a point where he could be seen for a long distance, and an Indian sentinel discovered him.

At once an alarm was given, and the scout saw that the redskins he had held in check were not all of the force by any means, for quite a large number appeared from a camp near and gave chase.

It was a race for life, and Buffalo Bill well knew it.

But he set off in a sweeping gallop, bringing his rifle around for ready use.

He congratulated himself that he was on the trail to the fort, and, unless some of the Indians were splendidly mounted, they could not catch his horse, tired as he was.

Then, too, he had faith in his long-range repeating rifle, and knew that he could hold any two or three well-mounted Indians in check, before their weapons would reach him.

So the chase went on, the scout not urging his horse, but keeping at a full gallop, while the redskins, coming on with a rush, steadily gained.

At last the Indians began to creep dangerously near, and there were all of fifty of them, who seemed well mounted and kept well together, save that their chief was a hundred feet in advance.

"I'll have to kill him if he comes much nearer," muttered the scout, measuring the distance well.

But the chief continued to draw nearer, and the braves yelled wildly in anticipation, believing that Buffalo Bill's horse was at his best speed.

Until he feared that some of them might have a rifle that was dangerous, the scout allowed them to gain.

Then he suddenly halted, and the Indians believed that he intended to make a stand-off fight, for they uttered the most piercing yells of delight.

But the scout had dismounted, for he wished no misses made, and raising his rifle pulled trigger.

Up went the hands of the chief, and over backward he fell from his horse, his comrades drawing in quickly to prevent going over him.

As they did so the scout's rifle began to rattle rapidly, and at the head of the red column ponies were falling, braves were dropping from the saddles and for a moment all was death and confusion.

But those who had weapons quickly got them ready to fire at the daring scout, when, to their surprise, they saw his horse fairly flying along the trail, at a speed not an animal among their own could attain.

For fully a mile did Buffalo Bill keep up his swift pace.

He wished to show his pursuers that they were running a useless race.

Of course it was hard on his tired horse, but the scout determined to give him a rest as soon as he could.

It was just as he had anticipated, for the Indians, feeling that he had deceived them, that his horse was really fresh and very fast, gave up the chase, especially as he had left them cause for mourning in the death of their chief and others.

Having dropped the redskins out of sight, Buffalo Bill rode on at a walk to allow his horse to rest, and when convinced that they had given up the chase, he halted, stripped the saddle from his faithful equine pard and allowed him a half hour's good rest.

Then he resumed his ride, going at a steady pace until noon, when he made another halt.

Of course these delays detained him more than he had expected, but he felt that he must not drive his horse too hard, for he would carry him along all right if not forced.

Thus detained by the way, the sun set before the fort came into view, but considering what he had gone through with, the scout did not feel that he had done so badly by any means.

Soon after nightfall the lights of the fort came into view, and half an hour after came the challenge of the sentinel to him.

"Scout from Fort Flagstaff with important dispatches," was the answer to the challenge.

The corporal of the guard was called, the scout was admitted, and the officer of the day went himself with him to headquarters, where Colonel Waring recognized him at a glance and said:

"You are most welcome, Cody, I assure you, for I was fearful that there might be something to prevent you doing so, and I knew no one who I could call upon for the very important duty I wish you to undertake."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COLONEL'S SECRET.

Buffalo Bill was pleased with his welcome by Colonel Waring, for he had served under that officer years before, and he knew just what he was.

He at once replied:

"I thank you, colonel, for your remembrance of me, and I am the bearer of dispatches for you, sir; but first let me tell you that the Indians are out in considerable force, and I had a couple of brushes with them, seeing over a hundred while they attacked a wagon train of emigrants and massacred every one of the party."

"Great God! this is terrible news, Cody, but why will those misguided emigrants persist in coming into this country?"

"This was a party from the south, sir, as it was a white family and a number of negroes accompanying them."

"And all were massacred?"

"Yes, sir, so I understand, from Captain Warburton."

"Ha! have you seen Warburton?" asked the colonel, eagerly.

"Yes, sir; I left him before midnight last night."

"How remarkable!"

"But when and where?"

"Over a hundred miles from here, sir, in what is known as Shelter Valley."

"Strange, strange indeed," and Colonel Waring appeared to be deeply moved for some cause.

But he quickly asked:

"Tell me about Warburton, Cody, for he is the very one I intended you to go and find."

"It was for that I wrote to General Marcus Moore at Flagstaff, to request him to let me have your services for awhile."

"Well, sir, I found Captain Warburton, whom we had heard at Flagstaff had mysteriously disappeared with his command, encamped in Shelter Valley with some twenty of his men."

"Yes, he left here with that number some three months ago, and went on a scout into the Indian country, but not returning, and unable to get a trace of them, we supposed they had all been massacred."

"They are all right, sir, save several who were killed, I believe, by the Indians."

"But what had become of them all this time?"

"They were corralled, I believe, sir; but let me tell you now that they are in need of aid in Shelter Valley, and I will guide a command to their relief, sir."

"They came upon the Indians just as they had killed the people of the wagon train, so saved the latter."

"Soon after I saw their lights and went to their camp, but remained only for rest and supper, as I was anxious to hurry on for help, as the captain expected to be attacked again when the Indians found out their number, but said he could stand them off, he thought."

"I will order a couple of troops to go to their relief, starting within two hours; but surely you must not go."

"I am all right, sir, only needing a fresh horse, and I would rather go, sir."

"All right; if you wish," and the Post Adjutant was sent for and the orders given for picked men and horses, with ample supplies, to be gotten ready with all dispatch to go and rescue the Warburton party.

Supper was then ordered for the scout in the colonel's quarters, and while Buffalo Bill was eating it Colonel Waring read the dispatches brought to him.

"Well, Cody, you do not know what a relief you have given me, in what you tell me of Warburton and his men, for I have had reason to feel very blue about that little command."

"I am glad that I ran across them as I did, colonel."

"Yes, you did just what I intended to send you to do, find them."

"They were camped not far off the regular trail, sir, and I saw their campfires."

"Ever modest, as is your wont; but you found them all the same, and so accomplished your task, and now will be the guide of the party that goes to their rescue."

"But did Warburton give you no particulars?"

"He told me of the massacre, sir, and that he had already buried the bodies."

"Poor people; but did he tell you nothing of himself?"

"No more than that they had been corralled, sir, and at last made their escape."

"The reason I ask, Cody, I will make known to you in confidence."

"Yes, sir."

"Warburton and his men disappeared most mysteriously three months ago, and all my efforts to trace them were useless."

"But while I had reason to believe them dead, I yet had strange news come in that a coach had been held up by soldiers, that a mining camp had been raided by soldiers, and an army wagon train had been captured by them."

"I could not believe it, even when it was reputed to be Warburton's command, and so I sent for you."

"Now, Warburton you have seen; he tells you he has been besieged by Indians, and hence these rumors are false, as far as soldiers having been guilty of the attacks alleged. Outlaws, not soldiers, did that work."

"This is my secret, Cody."

CHAPTER XVII.

A SECRET FOE.

With undisguised surprise Buffalo Bill heard the secret the colonel had to tell. Soldiers suspected of lawless deeds? It was preposterous, he thought, and he asked the colonel a number of questions as to who had brought in these rumors.

"Strange to say, Cody, I have it only from anonymous letters, and to no one, save my adjutant, have I spoken of these strange communications."

"From whence did they come, sir?"

"They were mailed at Overland, and written in a bold, educated hand."

"And told you that Captain Warburton and his command had turned outlaws?"

"Yes, about that."

"Robbing coaches, attacking mining camps, and capturing a Government wagon train."

"Yes."

"What did the stage driver, the miners, and the guard of the wagon train say, sir?"

"Ah! that is just the trouble, for the driver and passengers of the coach were all killed, the dozen men in the mining camp shared the same fate, and the score of wagoners and guard with the wagon train were utterly wiped out, so no one remained to tell the tale."

"Save the one who wrote you the letter, sir, that soldiers were the guilty ones?"

"Yes."

"Now, what do you think, Cody?"

"That soldiers never did it, sir."

"I could hardly believe it, and yet Warburton's mysterious disappearance

was very puzzling, especially as we know these lawless deeds were done, and the letter stated it was the act of the captain and his band."

"Captain Warburton can doubtless explain his absence, sir, to you, and perhaps can account for the anonymous charges against him, by tracing them to some enemy."

"No doubt, and that is the view I now take of it, though I confess I was deeply pained and much worried."

"Is Captain Warburton a popular officer, sir?"

"He is, indeed, and deservedly so, for he is a splendid type of a soldier."

"He is the youngest captain in the service, a dashing, handsome fellow, well off, a favorite with his brother officers, and most popular with his men, while he is daring to a fault, and always ready for any perilous duty."

"A good record, sir, certainly."

"But then there have been unkind rumors, coming from no one knew where, about him, for nothing appears to be known of his past."

"He was appointed from civil life, I believe, sir?"

"Yes, and did not go to West Point."

"Still, he attended a military school in France, where he was partly educated, and I have heard was an officer in the Mexican Army, but he never speaks of himself or refers to his past, and those who know him best know little about him."

"Still, he may be all right in every particular."

"Certainly, and I believe that he is."

"You will tell him of these anonymous letters, sir?"

"I had not thought of doing so; but I will, for it is best that he should know, as he may be able to trace them."

"Yes, sir."

"And a stab in the back is always from a coward's hand."

"You are right, Cody, and taking advantage of his being away, these attacks have been made to injure him."

"Do you suspect no one in the fort, sir?"

"They came from the stage station of Overland, you know."

"But could have been written here and sent there to be mailed?"

"But who by?"

"They might be written by a foe here, sir, as well as there, and, in fact, here is the place to look for his secret enemy."

"You have a very thorough way of putting it, Cody."

"I wish to get at this secret foe, sir."

"Go ahead, and we'll see if we can get at a clue, so ask what questions you wish."

"Has he a rival here?"

"Ah!"

"In love or war?"

"In both, sir, for envy is as bad as jealousy."

"It is, indeed."

"But to your question, for it interests me deeply, as you will understand when I tell you that Warburton has been most attentive to my daughter, my only child, Vera, and I had given my consent to his attentions to her, for, candidly, she has been much interested in him, and his stay away from the fort, his unknown fate, has been a very great sorrow to her, and to all of us."

"She has other suitors, some whom I do not admire, and, though I do not like to say so, one whom I believe not to possess the high sense of honor an army officer should have."

"But when Warburton returns we will hear his story, and then unearth this secret foe."

"Now, to rescue him and his men is the first duty, and I feel that that will soon be done; but you must get what rest you can before the start is made."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SCOUT MAKES A DISCOVERY.

Buffalo Bill followed the advice of Colonel Waring and got over an hour's sleep, which greatly refreshed him.

When he awoke he found the troopers, over a hundred strong, and with pack animals, instead of wagons, so that they could make a rapid ride of it, all ready to start.

Mounted upon a fine animal, supplied him by Colonel Waring, Buffalo Bill rode to the front, with half a dozen fort scouts following him, and the command at once moved off at a brisk walk in the darkness, just after midnight.

The officer in command, Captain Lew Lennox, was a particular friend of Captain Wallace Warburton, and was glad to be ordered to his rescue, for he had almost given him up as dead.

Captain Lennox was a perfect soldier, and had a dash about him that won the admiration of his men.

He had never met Buffalo Bill before, but had heard enough of the great plainsman to admire him immensely, and said, when Colonel Waring had presented the scout to him:

"I feel proud to follow such a guide and scout, Mr. Cody, and I will feel perfectly content as long as you point the way, while I will be most willing for any suggestions and advice from you, for, though a soldier of some experience on the frontier, I am free to say that I do not know it all."

This frank little speech quite won Buffalo Bill, and he replied that he had found those who did not profess to "know it all" were the men who did "now just what to do in a tight place."

"We will go at a good pace until dawn, and then camp for a couple of hours for rest and breakfast," said the captain, and Buffalo Bill set the pace accordingly.

It was a ride of twenty-five miles before a halt was made, and men and horses were warmed up to the work.

Buffalo Bill had found a good camping place just at dawn, and the horses were stripped of saddles and bridles for a good rest, and the cooks set to work getting breakfast.

Buffalo Bill was invited to mess with Captain Lennox, and the half dozen other officers along, for, besides the lieutenants, there was a surgeon in the party.

As soon as he had finished breakfast, and he certainly made a most favorable impression with all, the scout told Captain Lennox that he would at once start on ahead, and the other scouts were to follow half a mile apart, for, as he had escaped from the Indians, they would naturally be expecting help from the fort and especially if they had Captain Warburton besieged, they would throw out a force to ambush the command.

"I had not thought of that, Cody, but it is just about what they will do, only do you be careful not to ride into an ambush."

"I would be allowed to pass unharmed, sir, to catch the command, you know, so I will be in no danger," was the reply.

Soon after Buffalo Bill rode out of the camp, half an hour ahead of the command, and having explained his plan to his half dozen scouts.

"Keep all of a mile apart, men, and if you see a good place for an ambush, be on your guard, for it may be, should I pass redskins lying in wait, I will not have time to flank around and head you off in time."

With this he started on.

Though he did not expect to find Indians so near the fort, he thought it best to be prepared, if only because they might feel that they would not be looked for there.

Ten, twenty miles were gone over, and Buffalo Bill decided that he would halt the command for dinner and rest after thirty miles had been made.

He knew at the pace they were going, if kept up, the command could reach the Shelter Valley soon after nightfall, and be well rested and ready for an attack at dawn, should the Indians have Captain Warburton besieged.

The thirty miles were gone over, and Buffalo Bill was looking about for a noon camp, when he discovered ahead a little meadow that was the very spot.

It was surrounded by cliffs upon three sides, and was only a few acres in size, while the trail wound near it, and thence on through a canyon out upon a broad plain, beyond which the scout knew was the scene of his meeting with the mysterious man in the dress of bearskins.

"It is the very place for a camp, with water, grass, and wood in plenty, and—for an ambush, too."

"If they are not here, I will not expect to find them before I reach the spot where I rescued my grizzly friend."

"It is strange Colonel Waring and no one at the fort had seen or heard of that strange man, so akin to a wild beast in appearance—ah! I think I saw a deer then, or an Indian," and raising his field glass to his eyes as he rode along, he swept the trail far ahead, and muttered:

"It was an Indian."

They are in ambush here, so now comes the tug of war."

CHAPTER XIX.

FLANKING AN AMBUSH.

The moment that Buffalo Bill decided to ride on, he knew that he took his life in his hands.

It was his knowledge of the Indian character that caused him to take the chances, for he argued to himself that they having seen him go to the fort, after their attack on him, and knowing the close quarters Captain Warburton and his men were in, he would at once send or bring help.

It was surmise only, yet he risked his life on his opinion.

If they believed that help was following him, then he would be allowed to pass through their trap unharmed, that those following might be caught.

They would give up one scalp for many, as it were.

The position they had chosen was proof to the scout that they were in force enough to attack quite a number of soldiers.

If the soldiers went into the trap, the fire of the Indians would bring down half of them at least before they could retreat, for to advance against their foes concealed on cliffs would be madness.

So on the scout rode, merely increasing his pace to a gallop as he drew near the Indians, whom he was sure were lying in close ambush, though he had seen but one from a distance.

That one horseman told him that others were near.

When within a couple of hundred yards of the pass, Buffalo Bill narrowly searched the cliffs, though without appearing to do so.

He realized fully that any moment a volley might ring out and kill him, but he did not suspect that it would.

He had argued well, for no movement was seen, no shot was fired.

There in the hiding places were a number of Indians, he knew, but they were waiting for bigger game.

They saw in the horseman a fort scout, for they did not recognize in him the great White Chief Pa-e-has-ka, as Buffalo Bill was so well known to all the tribes.

Reaching the pass, Buffalo Bill rode through, half halted, and gazed at a trail lately made, passed on, and drew a long breath as he got beyond the ambush.

Though appearing not to see them, his searching glances had found at least a dozen redskins, as silent as the rocks they were hiding among.

Once well away from the dangerous locality, he quickened his pace, bore sharply to the left, and then began to dash along the range, to flank the pass and get back upon the trail in time to head off his scouts.

It was a hard ride, but he spared not his horse, and in twenty minutes dashed out upon the trail again.

He saw a scout some distance away, coming toward him.

"Too bad, for one has gone by."

"But I did my best."

"He will see my trail where it turned

off and be at fault, if he is not killed by the Indians."

As he uttered the last word the scout rode up.

"Ho, Maddern! Bent has gone ahead."

"Yes, sir."

"Too bad! A large force of Indians is ambushed at the pass a mile ahead on the trail. I passed through them, and flanked around to head you off. Return at full speed and ask Captain Lennox to come up rapidly."

The scout wheeled his horse and was off at a run.

Riding along the trail until he came to a sheltered hill, Buffalo Bill dismounted, climbed to the summit, and turned his glass upon the trail ahead.

The trail was visible to the pass, three-quarters of a mile away, and the glass revealed the scout, Bent, just riding up under the cliffs.

"Will they let him pass, too?"

"I hardly believe so," muttered the scout.

As he spoke an exclamation broke from his lips, for the scout was seen to half wheel, his hands went up, and he dropped from his saddle, a dead man.

A dozen arrows had made a target of the poor fellow.

Ere his startled horse could bound away, several redskins bounded out from among the boulders, and as many lariats were thrown.

The horse was cleverly caught, and at once led at a gallop on through the pass, while four braves gathered up the body and ran with it to a hiding place.

"They were not prepared for me, but they got poor Bent," said the scout, and going rapidly down the hill, he threw himself into his saddle and rode at a gallop back to meet the command.

CHAPTER XX.

THE ROUND-UP.

The troopers were met coming at a brisk trot, Captain Lennox being well in advance with several officers.

In his terse way, when moved, Buffalo Bill said: "Captain Lennox, the Indians are ambushed at the Pass a mile and a half ahead, but in what force I have no means of knowing."

"There may be a couple of hundred of them."

"I passed through their trap, flanked around, and sent Scout Maddern after you."

"I am sorry I was not in time to save poor Bent, but I just saw him shot to death by arrows."

"The way I came troopers can return, a part going up the range to attack the redskins in their hiding place, more going to the other side of the Pass to cut off their retreat, and capture their ponies, which cannot be far away, and can be put slimly guarded."

"The remainder of the force can continue slowly along this trail until they hear the attack on the range, and then move forward, catching the Indians between three fires."

"Such is the situation, sir."

"And most explicit it is, Cody, and I thank you for your prompt action."

"Which force do you think should be the largest?"

"I would send the largest force around to strike the trail, sir, for it has to be divided to catch the ponies."

"True."

"Will you guide that party?"

"Yes, sir."

"I will follow on their trail, Captain Merton you will make the attack on the range, Cody showing you where to turn off, and Lieutenant Lee you will take your command around to strike the trail, head off a retreat, and capture the ponies, Chief of Scouts Cody guiding you."

The orders were given in a way to fully understand, and within ten minutes after the command came up the forces were divided into three, two going in the same direction until the range should be reached.

"There is your path, Captain Merton,

up the range, and it is over half a mile to the Pass.

"May I suggest that you dismount your men to avoid being discovered in your approach?"

"A good idea, Mr. Cody, and I shall act upon it," answered Captain Merton, and the commands separated.

"Now, Mr. Cody, I am frank to ask you for advice," said Lieutenant Basil Lee, a handsome young lieutenant, who had now seventy men under his command.

"We will strike the trail, sir, and as agreed with Captain Merton await his attack.

"Then twenty men can dash off in search of the ponies, while you move up to close in on the Pass."

"What force will likely be with the ponies?"

"I do not think over a dozen Indians, sir, if so many."

"Then twenty men will be sufficient."

"Fully enough, sir."

"And about finding the ponies?"

"They are not on this side of the Pass, sir, as we know, so must be upon the other.

"Scout Maddern will go with that party and he will soon find them."

A ride of half a mile further and Cody halted.

The trail was in sight, and the soldiers must not be seen by any redskin and the alarm given.

It must be a complete surprise to those who intended a deadly surprise.

"You have planned this wonderfully well, Scout Cody, and every officer and man is anxious to follow your lead," said the young lieutenant, and the modest reply was:

"It has been the study of my life, sir, to know the Indian and outplot him, so I deserve no credit."

Five, ten minutes passed away, and no sound was heard on the range, to show that Captain Merton had met the enemy.

But that the Indians were still in blissful ignorance, and the fond hope of many scalps, their silence proved.

Had a soldier been seen they would have at once made the fact known.

The twenty soldiers under a sergeant and Scout Maddern had been told off for the capture of the ponies, and Lieutenant Lee and his men, fifty in number, were awaiting for the sound of firing to press in on the Pass and hem the Indians in from that end, while Captain Lennox came up with his force toward the scene of ambush and Captain Merton with sixty troopers would drive the lurking foe down from the range by taking them in their rear.

Another five minutes went by, and then a roar was heard upon the range, as half a hundred carbines flashed together.

"Charge!" shouted Lieutenant Lee, and the troopers under his command obeyed with the willingness of the true soldiers they were.

CHAPTER XXI.

A FIGHT AT CLOSE QUARTERS.

Captain Merton had dismounted his men, leaving a few soldiers to follow with the horses, and thus had gained a point close to the cliffs without being seen.

A scout had gone on ahead, discovered the Indians crowding the whole side of the hill fronting on the trail, and so had led the soldiers within carbine range.

Not a redskin expected a foe near, and many a soldier had a chance to pick out his man and fire, so that when the volley came it was a deadly one.

With cheers the soldiers rushed forward, the surprised redskins rushing pell mell down the steep hillside to the valley, and where they could dash through the pass toward their ponies.

But as they reached the valley, followed by the rattle of the carbines, into sight charged Captain Lennox and his force.

They did not expect to go that way, but his coming hastened their steps, and in an instant they were running to the Pass.

They were in large numbers, fully two hundred being in sight, while others were visible upon the tops of the steep cliffs beyond the Pass, and they were preparing to open fire and check the advance of Captain Lennox.

But just then a ringing cheer was heard beyond the Pass, the heavy tramp of hoofs, and Lieutenant Lee and his men cut off the retreat of the flying foe.

And more, those upon the cliffs, believing they were to be hemmed in, turned and fled without a shot being fired upon Captain Lennox and his men.

Huddled together in the Pass, with Captain Merton on the hillside they had fled from, and firing down upon them, Captain Lennox closing in on them in one direction and Lieutenant Lee in another, the red foe became desperate, massed together and with yells, shots, and desperation, made a rush to break through the Pass, and gain their ponies.

This, as Buffalo Bill had said, brought the hardest fighting upon Lieutenant Lee's command.

The troopers met the shock bravely, with revolver and sabre, and many a brave went down.

But the fight was fierce and short, half the force broke through, and a chief and half a dozen of his braves went off on the horses of fallen troopers.

Instantly the lieutenant wheeled and gave chase, but a pine thicket checked mounted men, where it protected those on foot.

Away sped the Indians toward their ponies, to behold with almost despair that they were being driven rapidly off by another party of soldiers.

They started in pursuit, in their mad desperation, but up came Lieutenant Lee, Buffalo Bill by his side, and a couple of score of soldiers, and the redskins were headed off just as they might have captured their ponies, who were in a rocky pass.

Turned back, the braves sped for the shelter of the pines and the range beyond, where their comrades, a hundred in number, awaited them, and powerless to lend any aid.

Captain Lennox and his men now came up, and it was a running fight to the range.

Once there, the Indians on foot could escape, for horses could not ascend the rugged hill, and the chief and those who had also mounted the horses of dead troopers had to desert the animals, but not until they had taken the revenge at least of knifing the horses they had captured.

"Don't kill them now, men! Let them go, for our victory is a great one," said Captain Lennox, and the flying, dodging Indians continued their flight up the range.

"Well, Cody, thanks to you, we were saved and half of our foes destroyed. Lee, you met that charge well, but three times your force could not have checked that desperate rush.

"We have lost a dozen men, at least, and as many more wounded; but the Indian losses are ten to one. We will camp here for the present, at least, and decide what is best to be done.

"Come, Cody, I wish to see you," and Captain Lennox led the way to the pass, which was choked up with dead and wounded Indians, soldiers and horses, and where Captain Merton and his men were on foot trying to aid the sufferers, and acting under the direction of the surgeon.

The victory was complete. One-third of the Indian force had been killed or wounded, the remainder were in rapid flight on foot, their horses and supplies having been captured, and all this done within an hour's time, and where the red foe had been ambushed to strike even a severer blow upon the soldiers—would have done so, in fact, but for Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER XXII.

PUSHING ON TO THE RESCUE.

"Buffalo Bill saved us!"

Such was the admission of the officers, from Captain Lennox down.

Such was the cry of the men.

Had the command ridden into that deadly ambush, great would have been the mourning throughout the land.

"And he took almost certain chances of death to do so, by first riding through the ambush alone," Captain Merton remarked.

Buffalo Bill, with his scouts, was making a show of pursuing the Indians, to keep them going in their retreat, while the command went into camp.

The soldiers had found a good camping place beyond the pass, the horses were staked out, fires were built, and a shelter of boughs had been made for the wounded.

The dead were all gathered, the Indians in one place, the soldiers in another, while graves were being dug for them.

The wounded redskins, to their surprise, were being cared for as well as the soldiers.

The first thing Captain Lennox had done was to dispatch a courier at full speed to the fort, asking for ambulances to be sent for the wounded, and also to have a company of mounted infantry and a couple of light guns follow him, as he believed the Indians were in very large force, and they were yet not near Shelter Valley, where they expected to relieve Captain Warburton.

This done, a small force was left with the camp as a guard to the wounded, and Buffalo Bill and his scouts having returned, supper was had and the command mounted to press on to Shelter Valley.

With the force so large that was sent to ambush them, Captain Lennox feared that Warburton and his men had been overwhelmed, though Buffalo Bill said that he thought they could hold their own, in the camp where he had left them, for several days.

Still, the scout had urged pressing on without delay to their relief.

The halt at the pass of several hours would delay their arrival at Shelter Valley until after midnight, while the killed and wounded soldiers, and the guard of a dozen left with them, reduced the force by thirty men.

Still, Captain Lennox knew that Colonel Waring would quickly dispatch the aid asked, and this would strengthen his command greatly.

The spot chosen was a good one to defend, and, should straggling Indians attempt to recapture their ponies, they would meet with a strong resistance, while extra campfires were built, double sentinels placed, and all made to appear that there were many more soldiers there than there really were.

Buffalo Bill was again well in front guiding, and he kept his scouts strung out behind him for the distance of half a mile only, when the command came, being within quick call.

He did not know but that another ambush might be awaiting them.

The scene of his meeting with what he called the "Wild Man" was reached before sunset, and here Captain Lennox brought his command close up, he riding ahead with Buffalo Bill.

The Indians had removed their dead, but their ponies, three in number, were being picked by coyotes, and further on was the animal ridden by the Wild Man.

"There is where he fired upon the Indians, sir, after he left me," said Buffalo Bill, pointing to the cliff.

"Describe him to me, Cody."

"Well, sir, it is easily done, for he was dressed in the skin of a grizzly bear, had a feather head-dress, wore his hair and beard long, and would have been shot for a bear at the distance of a hundred yards!"

"The Indians were chasing him?"

"Yes, sir, to my surprise, for the redskins generally dread such a man, and

consider it 'bad medicine' to kill one they regard as a madman.

"But they were hot after him for some reason, and as his horse went down with him, they would have gotten him had I not fortunately come up in time."

"You had no conversation with him?"

"No, sir, for I had to act lively, not talk."

"He was pinned down by his horse, and I had to release him, and when I looked again he was gone."

"Strange that he should desert you."

"I do not think he intended to do so, sir, as he went up the cliff and from there helped me."

"And you saw him no more?"

"No, sir, for I had to push on to the fort for help for Captain Warburton."

"Otherwise, I would have looked him up."

"But just then I had about all I could do to look after myself."

"Well, upon our return we will see if we can find any trace of him."

"It will be a hard thing to do, sir, as he was on foot."

"Will you camp on the stream here, sir, for a short rest, or push on?"

"We will camp for half an hour, and then push on without a halt to Shelter Valley, for I confess I am most anxious about Warburton and his men," answered Captain Lennox, and while the men rested Buffalo Bill went on foot to have a look at the cliff where he had last seen the mysterious man in the bearskin attire, and Lieutenant Basil Lee accompanied him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LONE CAMPER

Reaching the cliff, as the sun was upon the horizon, Buffalo Bill and Lieutenant Lee had light enough to take in the surroundings.

There was no trace there, however, of the Wild Man. The trail led back from the cliff into the mountains, and if he had gone that way his tracks did not show.

He had climbed up to the cliff by a way he must have known, or he could not have found it so readily, for the scout had some difficulty in finding it.

Returning to the temporary camp, Buffalo Bill found the captain ready to push on, and once more he went ahead, but with the command in close order now, the scouts right behind their leader and the troopers following.

Buffalo Bill had no difficulty in following a trail he had once passed over, and in the darkness he stuck to it without a mistake, leaving his horse to do the guessing when he dreaded that he might be at fault.

After a brisk ride the troopers came to a halt just after midnight, and upon the summit of the hill over which the trail led down into Shelter Valley.

Buffalo Bill left his horse with the command, and with a couple of scouts on foot went down into the valley.

It was all of a mile to where the camp was, and he could see no lights from the hilltop, but then that was no sign that the force was not there and not besieged, either, for many redskins might be surrounding them, and yet be as silent as the dead.

Cautiously the three scouts went along, for they did not know at what second they might run upon an Indian sentinel.

If they ran into a trap, they had agreed to signal the command by striking a match, and sentinels were kept on the watch, that the troopers might come to the rescue.

It was slow work making their way, but nearer and nearer the camp where the scout had left Captain Warburton they drew, and not an Indian had been seen.

"All is terribly dark there, sir," said Scout Maddern, in a whisper, as they stood in the trail looking up toward the timber on the rise, where the camp was located.

"Yes, but I believe I saw a glimmer of

light, though I may have been mistaken," answered Buffalo Bill.

As he spoke there came a faint flicker of flame in the timber.

"I was right."

"Some one is there."

On they moved now, more cautiously than before, and until within a couple of hundred yards they approached.

Then the scout halted, crouched upon the ground, and waiting watched with eyes riveted upon the camp.

Several times light had flared up, like the last energy of a dying fire, and Buffalo Bill said:

"If they are there, they have sentinels on the watch, of course, and must believe the Indians are still near."

"If they have been massacred, then the Indians are there, waiting to entrap a relief party that might arrive at night."

"Some one is there, I feel assured, and we can do nothing until dawn, and that is an hour away, so you go, Belt, and tell Captain Lennox to move slowly into the valley along the trail we came."

"Yes, sir."

"You guide them, Belt, and ask Captain Lennox to let the men dismount and lead their horses, so as to come as quietly as possible."

"I will, sir," and Scout Belt slipped away in the darkness, while Buffalo Bill and Maddern were left to still watch the camp.

Several times the light flared up, and once burned steadily for several seconds. In that time a form was seen to pass in front of it.

Then came a shower of sparks, that denoted more wood being thrown upon a smouldering fire, and Buffalo Bill remarked:

"Now we will see who is there, pale-face or redskin."

"Yes, sir; but it is strange we hear no sound if the soldiers are there."

"Yes, Maddern, and if Indians are there, why have they no sentinels out—ah!"

As Buffalo Bill spoke the fire burned up brightly, and the blaze revealed an object that caused Scout Maddern to exclaim:

"It is a grizzly bear!"

"No, it is my Wild Man, and he is alone. See, he is getting his breakfast!"

The man was seen bending over the fire, and his grizzly robe and feather hat were plainly visible.

"What will you do, sir?" whispered Maddern.

"Creep nearer and see if we cannot make friends with him—too bad! too bad!"

The words broke from the lips of Buffalo Bill as suddenly, down on the trail, there came the loud neigh of a cavalry horse.

The animal had caught sight of the kindling campfire, and had neighed, other horses being choked off by their masters before they could join in with him.

The moment the neigh was heard, the bear-robed form was seen to bound away from the fire.

Quickly Buffalo Bill called out:

"Hold, pard! We are friends, not foes! I saved you from the Indians two days ago!"

But, there was no response. All was a deathlike silence in the timber.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MYSTERIOUS TRAIL.

The scout receiving no answer to his call, again cried:

"Don't fly, pard, for we need your aid."

"We are soldiers from Fort Fenton!"

With the last word came a wild yell that was demoniacal in its ferocity and intense in its utterance of seeming hate.

Buffalo Bill knew that his words had touched upon some chord that had awakened the deepest feeling in the man, for some reason.

He knew that the man, whoever he might be, would not halt then, and, call-

ing to Maddern to follow, he dashed toward the timber.

Maddern was a man who had always prided himself upon his fleetness of foot, but he now found that Buffalo Bill was leaving him rapidly behind.

"He outruns a deer," he muttered, yet still kept on, and now his leader disappeared in the timber.

When he arrived there Buffalo Bill was not to be seen, but he detected his running feet afar off in the darkness.

To follow would be to deaden the sound, and he would go wrong, so he awaited there by the fire.

He saw where the wood had been recently put on, and upon a bed of coals a large venison steak was broiling.

The Wild Man had deserted his breakfast.

Close to the fire was a bed of pine straw, where the man had passed the night, and then to his surprise Maddern found that he was right among some new-made graves.

"A cheerful place this to spend the night," he muttered and then added:

"The man slept there as a wild animal might."

"Who can he be?"

"Well, if any one can catch him, Chief Cody is the one, for I never saw a man run as he does."

The sound of hoofs could now be distinctly heard, and a few minutes after up came Captain Lennox and Scout Belt.

"Ho, Maddern, that is you, is it?"

"Yes sir."

"Where is Chief Cody?"

"He went off in chase of his Wild Man, sir."

"Ah! Did you see him?"

"Yes, sir, he was camping here."

"It was the Wild Man who uttered that diabolical yell?"

"Yes, sir."

"And Cody went after him?"

"He called to the man we were friends, then said we were soldiers from Fort Fenton, and then the Wild Man gave that yell, sir."

"Chief Cody called to me to follow him, but I couldn't run with him any more than I could with a deer, and so I lost him."

"He doubtless saw which way the Wild Man went and is following."

"Yes, sir."

"And there is no one here?"

"Only those graves, sir."

"Yes, I see them."

"Belt, build up the fire, for we will camp here; the command is coming up."

"Yes, sir," answered the scout, while Captain Lennox turned again to Maddern and asked:

"Cody said this was where Captain Warburton and his men were camped?"

"Yes, sir."

"And there is no trace of them?"

"None, sir."

"Or of the Indians?"

"No, sir."

"Well, dawn is coming, and then we will find out what has happened, while, if Cody catches his Wild Man he can perhaps tell us something."

The command now came up, and Captain Lennox gave orders to go into camp and have breakfast.

Soon a dozen campfires shed their light through the timber, and the coming of day paled them and revealed a picturesque scene.

It was a pretty spot, well timbered, with a stream running by the hill, upon which the camp was located.

But then in the timber were the graves of the massacred people of the Ellis wagon train.

As the sun arose and Buffalo Bill did not appear, Captain Lennox was growing more and more anxious about him, fearing that the Wild Man might have trapped him in some way.

But just as he was about to start the scouts out in search of him, Buffalo Bill was seen approaching at a brisk walk.

The soldiers greeted his appearance with a shout, and, walking up to Captain Lennox and saluting, he said:

"I could not catch him, sir, for I lost him in the darkness of yonder hills."

"I suppose Scout Maddern has told you who was the lone camper we found here?"

"Yes."

"And instead of believing us friends, that devilish yell of his showed that he regarded us with dread."

"That was my idea, or it was with hatred that he regarded us."

"There may be some reason in that, Cody."

"But what of Warburton and his men?"

"Here is where I left them, sir."

"Yes, and they are gone?"

"They have, sir."

"And I note that wagons and all went with them by the trail."

"They may have been overwhelmed by the redskins."

"No, sir, not here; for the Indians would have burned the wagons right here, and taken only the stock; but the trail shows that the whole train left here."

"But we could not have followed them in the night."

"Oh, no, sir, and for a very good reason."

"What is it?"

"They went in the other direction, sir."

"Why, what does that mean, Cody?"

"I do not know yet, sir."

"But there is their trail, sir, and it leads back over the one they came, and away from the fort."

"I do not comprehend it, Cody."

"Nor do I, sir, just yet."

"But the trail, as I crossed it yonder, appears to have been made all of a day and night ago."

"But this is a good camping place, sir, and after breakfast I will see what I can discover of Captain Warburton's reason for leaving here, and especially going away from help instead of to meet it."

CHAPTER XXV.

IN SUSPENSE.

The officers were all gathered around the spot where their breakfast had been spread by their mess cooks, and Buffalo Bill was with them.

But it was evident that none cared to talk much.

The scout's report of the mysterious way the trail of Captain Warburton led made all feel that there was something to be explained.

Why had Captain Warburton left the camp unless driven from it?

Why did he not await the coming of aid, as he knew Buffalo Bill would bring it from Fort Fenton without fail?

Why had he, in leaving his camp, gone from the fort, rather than toward it?

If he had wished to flank any redskins that lay between him and the fort, he could not do so, as a mountain range would have caused him to travel a hundred miles out of his way to do so.

Then why leave at all?

Grass, water, and wood were plentiful, he had all the provisions of the wagon train, and should have remained.

What had the Wild Man to do with the going of the soldiers, for he had been found in their camp?

Had the Wild Man sent the soldiers off on some false trail from reasons of his own?

Had he not led them into a trap for the same reasons?

Naturally Captain Warburton would believe a white man who came to his camp with any news of danger.

Why had the Wild Man run from presumably his friends, from Buffalo Bill, who had saved him from the Indians?

All these questions the officers were asking themselves mentally.

They did not like the appearance of things as they found them.

"Well, Cody, what is to be done?"

asked Captain Lennox as the Chief of Scouts finished his breakfast.

"I will take a couple of scouts with me and push on along the trail, sending back word the first discovery I make."

"And the command to await here?"

"Yes, sir, if you deem best, for it is a splendid camp, and men and horses need rest."

"Then, too, sir, it is convenient in whatever direction you have to move, while it is the place those Indians on foot must pass on their way back to their village, their trail leading through this valley."

"That is so, and they ought to be along by night."

"Yes, sir."

"And then you know more force is coming from the fort, and this is their destination."

"Yes, here we remain unless you send some word that causes us to pull out."

"I may make some discovery soon, sir; but I will know in a few hours if that Wild Man took any story to Captain Warburton to cause him to take that long trail around the mountain to reach the fort."

"Yes, for he must have done so, as that is the only excuse I can find for Warburton's leaving his camp."

"But, I depend upon you, Cody, to unravel the mystery, and shall await your messenger with anxiety."

Calling to Maddern and Belt to accompany him, Buffalo Bill was mounting his horse when Lieutenant Basil Lee called out:

"Cody, I have Captain Lennox's permission to go with you, but not as an officer, if it is all the same to you."

"I shall be delighted to have your company, sir, for four heads are better than three," responded Buffalo Bill.

Five minutes after he rode off with the lieutenant by his side and Scouts Maddern and Belt following.

The officer and men watched their going and made comments among themselves that were most complimentary to Buffalo Bill.

"We owe him our lives, and we will owe more to him before this trail is ended, or I am greatly mistaken," said Captain Lennox.

"He is a very remarkable man, indeed."

"I did not believe half of the stories told of his wonderful career and powers, but now I have met him, I am sure not the half has been told," Captain Lennox said.

"And such is my opinion," added an officer, while another remarked:

"But for the neighing of that trooper's horse, Captain Lennox, he would have had that Wild Man, for he said he intended to creep up and lasso him, fearing he might run off, after his doing so when he saved him from the Indians."

And among the men like comments were being made, while in the meanwhile Buffalo Bill and those with him were seen to go over the hill and were lost to view as they followed the trail of Captain Warburton.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LOST TRAIL.

The four horsemen continued their way over the range, and down the steep trail to the plain, Buffalo Bill narrowly watching the tracks as they went along.

At last he said:

"This trail is all of twenty-four hours old, Lieutenant Lee, if not older."

"It has that appearance to me, Cody."

"In that case Captain Warburton left that camp where I saw him before the Wild Man could have possibly reached him."

"You think so?"

"I'll tell you just how I look at it, sir."

"I left the captain's camp in the night, and it was daylight when I came upon the Wild Man."

"Yes."

"I then had to stand the brush with the Indians, and flank around them to get back to the trail."

"Which delayed you considerably."

"Some hours, sir."

"I arrived in the fort at night, and was only there three hours when the command started out, and that was some twenty-four hours after leaving Captain Warburton's camp."

"Then yesterday and to-day so far make some twenty-four hours more, and this trail was made soon after I left the camp."

"I believe you know, Cody."

"But about the Wild Man?"

"Yes, sir."

"It was eight hours after I left Captain Warburton that I met the Wild Man, for we only know him as such, and as he was on foot, he could not have reached the camp until yesterday some time, and I am sure the captain had moved out long before."

"If he had seen the captain and given him what was supposed to be valuable information, then he certainly would have received a horse and some supplies."

"These he did not have, for he bounded away from the fire at my call, leaving his venison steak on the coals, and he picked up nothing else, and this is proof that he did not see the captain, but got to the camp after he was gone."

"You have got it down fine, Cody."

"Now, it is for us to find out why Captain Warburton so quickly left his camp after my departure, and again, why, he came this trail."

"Do you think Indians could have forced him out?"

"No, sir, there was not a sign of Indians that I could see about the camp."

"I do not understand it, Cody, so cannot help solve the mystery of Warburton's leaving."

Buffalo Bill made no reply for a minute, and then said, in a low tone, so as the two scouts did not hear him, as they were riding fifty feet in the rear:

"I was surprised to find no trace whatever of Indians about the camp, lieutenant."

"Yet the camp was attacked by Indians?"

"Oh, yes, sir, only I did not see the trail left by their ponies, so they must have run in on the train on foot, though I understood Captain Warburton to say, they were mounted."

"They doubtless made the attack on foot."

"Yes, sir, and I misunderstood him; but I did not find any signs of Indians about the camp, and if any were killed by the soldiers, what was done with the bodies?"

Lieutenant Lee glanced fixedly at the scout, and said:

"You have in your mind, Cody, what you will not give expression to."

"The truth is, there are ugly rumors in camp, coming from no one knows where, and seemingly known to but few; but they reflect upon Captain Warburton in a way I would resent, if his own actions did not aid in the belief that they had some foundation."

"Candidly, Cody, and in confidence, I will tell you that the rumor is that Warburton and his band have deserted and actually turned outlaws."

"When you came with the news of his being corralled, and in camp in Shelter Valley, I believed all was well."

"But his being gone mystifies me again, I confess."

"It is strange, sir, to say the least; but I hope all will come out well."

"As I do, most sincerely, for Warburton is one of the noblest of men, and if he has gone wrong, which I cannot believe without proof, then he certainly is crazy, and not responsible for his actions."

"But what do you see now?"

"A herd of buffalo have come this far, sir, and turned back, destroying the wagon trail by their tracks."

"We will soon strike it again, I suppose."

"After crossing the stream, sir, we will."

But the stream was reached, crossed,

and not a trace of the wagon trail was visible anywhere.

The many tracks of the herd of buffalo had obliterated the wheel marks and the hoof prints of the horses.

The wagon trail was utterly gone, and the buffalo had followed on after it, as Buffalo Bill said:

"As though to wipe it out."

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY.

The party halted at the stream to water their horses and also to consider what was best to be done.

Buffalo Bill was quietly thinking, and the others waited for him to speak.

He rode around about the ford several times, and at last said:

"The buffaloes have shut out the wagon trail, that is certain, but there are the tracks of horses, half a dozen or following after the herd, I notice.

"And more, the horses are shod, so they passed along behind the herd.

"Now, my idea is that the buffalo came here to drink, grazed about for awhile across the stream, and went back over their trail for some strange reason, for it would have been more natural had they continued on to Shelter Valley, where the grass is plentiful.

"But they turned back, or were driven back, and it looks to me as though the last was the way of it, from these iron-shod tracks."

"But for what reason, Cody?"

"There can be but one reason, lieutenant."

"And that was—"

"To cover up the wagon tracks."

"Yes, I guess the captain didn't want the Indians to follow," said Maddern, while Belt added:

"And a herd of buffalo can about wipe out a trail as well as anything I know, and we may have to go a long way to strike it again, and I suppose the captain saw the herd and made them useful."

"We will ride on, Lieutenant Lee, and see how far the herd covered up the trail," said Buffalo Bill.

So on they rode, and watching the way most carefully, Buffalo Bill made a discovery and in a low tone said to the officer:

"These iron-shod tracks went only so far and are going back to the stream."

"I see them, now you call my attention to the fact."

"They are scattered, as you see, sir, no two men riding close together, and this I read as a desire that the tracks of their horses should not be seen among the many others in going back to the stream."

"And what do you make out of it, Cody?"

"That the herd of buffalo were made use of to cover up the wagon trail, sir."

"Ah! to prevent Indians from following?"

"I am not prepared just yet, sir, to give an opinion as to the reason."

The plain was crossed, a range of hills reached, and there the buffalo tracks leading the way they were, branched off from the regular trail into the hills.

There, too, Buffalo Bill saw that the tracks of the iron-shod hoofs had turned back.

"The herd was driven by horsemen up to this point, sir, and when the drivers turned back, you see that the buffalo scattered at will."

"Yes."

"But you also see, Lieutenant Lee, that the herd when it came this way struck to the trail."

"I observe it."

"And their tracks destroy the wagon tracks?"

"Yes."

"Now, the herd was driven when it came this way, as it would never have stuck to the trail so closely."

"Does that mean that it was driven over the trail to hide it?"

"It looks so to me."

"And you wish to push on to where the herd was driven on the trail and the wagon tracks are visible?"

"That is just it."

"Cody, you are a wonder, I again say, and I'll follow your lead anywhere."

"Thanks for the compliment, sir," and Buffalo Bill now set the pace at a rapid canter.

After several miles had been gone over the scout suddenly drew rein.

It was at the top of a range, overlooking a wide plain.

"Here is where the buffalo herd was found, sir, feeding on that plain, and you see they were rounded up and driven in this direction, striking the trail here."

"Yes, and I see that we have found the wagon train trail, Cody," said the officer, pointing to where it was visible coming up the slope and could be seen marked across the plain.

"There is one thing you have failed to observe, sir."

"What is that?"

"And neither have our two scouts there observed the fact."

"No, but you have made a discovery, I am sure."

"Do you observe, sir, that though we are looking upon the wagon trail, it is coming this way?"

"By the Lord Harry, but you are right, Cody!"

"What does it mean?"

"It means that this is the trail made to Shelter Valley, and that the buffaloes hid the one made coming back, from the stream to this point, and more, we failed to see where Captain Warburton turned off, so he has covered up his tracks well, indeed."

"Well, if you were at a loss, so were the Indians, Cody."

"There were no Indians following him, sir."

"But he covered up his tracks to prevent them doing so, surely."

"If there were no Indians, sir, why did he leave his strong camp in Shelter Valley to come this way, and had there been Indians galore, also, why did he leave it, when he knew help was coming?"

"I give it up."

"I don't sir, for, as there is a mystery hanging over his movements, I am interested in finding it out, and will do so in the end," and Buffalo Bill's lips closed in a way natural to him when he had made up his mind to carry out a certain purpose.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

UNDER SUSPICION.

Having thoroughly satisfied himself that the wagon train had not passed back over the trail it had come, Buffalo Bill turned toward Shelter Valley again.

But he sent his two scout comrades to the flank of the buffalo trail on either side, with orders to note if they could see where the wagons had turned off at any point.

With Lieutenant Lee he rode back along the direct trail, making a close observation all along the way.

The way was thus gone over, and late in the afternoon the four men met again at the stream.

"I saw no trail, sir, and the wagons never turned off," said Maddern.

"There was no show of 'em on my side either, Chief Cody," remarked Belt.

"Then the wagons turned off before they got this far, and we failed to notice it," the lieutenant said.

"But where, sir, and for what purpose, for, as I understood it, the ranges on either side would have blocked their way."

"True."

"Do you think they were burned?"

"We saw no signs, sir."

"Then I am at the end of my rope, Cody, and it is for you to say what was done."

Buffalo Bill made no reply, but rode down into the stream.

After examining the sandy bottom closely he called out:

"Maddern, gallop down this stream for a mile or so and see if there is any obstruction in it to wagons passing by following its bed."

Maddern started off at a gallop.

"You, Belt, go up the stream for a mile or two."

Belt rode away along the bank in the direction ordered.

"Cody, do you think the train could have turned off here?"

"There is no other place for it to have done so, sir."

"If it went down the stream there is no outlet save by Shelter Valley."

"You know this, sir?"

"I do, for I have scouted along there several times."

"And if the train went up the stream?"

"It would bear away from Shelter Valley, and go into the Indian country."

"I have never been up that way further than this ford, and I do not think any of the fort scouts have either."

"Nor have I, sir, though I scouted some through this country several years ago."

"If the wagons have gone up the stream, what then?"

"In that case, sir, I would say that Captain Warburton was not running from Indians."

"Ah!"

"But what then?"

"I speak only, sir, from guess work; but it looks to me as though he was not anxious to be rescued, as in going into the Indian country he would be turning his back upon all help from the fort."

"I cannot say a word against that argument, Cody."

"But if we find the train has gone up the stream, what is to be done?"

"I will go ahead alone, sir, marking my trail, while the two scouts camp here within sight of this ford, and I am going to ask you to return to camp and place Captain Lennox in possession of the full facts, as we know them."

"I will do so."

"And suggest, please, Lieutenant Lee, that he open those graves and find out just who is in them."

"A good idea."

"And in the morning, sir, start a force to come this way and follow my trail, while it would be a good idea to leave the expected reinforcements in camp, to fall back upon in case of need, or call to our help, should we strike a larger force of redskins than we care to find."

"Go ahead, Cody, and make any suggestion you wish, for I know that Captain Lennox will be only too glad to learn your views, as he has unbounded confidence in you."

"I have no more to suggest, sir, for it may be that I will have to stick to the trail alone, as soldiers moving into the Indian country may cause a gathering of warriors we do not wish, and which would thwart our purpose."

"Which purpose is to find Warburton and his command?"

"Yes, sir, if he will let us."

"I see that you are beginning to doubt him, Cody?"

"In the absence of any reason for his strange conduct, sir, I must say it looks as though he was playing hide and seek with those who have come to his rescue."

"It does, indeed."

"He may have some good reason we do not know for his strange movements, but they look queer, to say the least."

"I agree with you; but I cannot believe without full proof that Warburton can go wrong, as the ugly rumors in the fort have it that he has done; and your discoveries so far give apparent belief."

"You know that we hardly dare hint such an idea among ourselves, and the men, who must have heard of the rumor, are keeping very close-mouthed."

"Then there is a sergeant with Warburton by the name of Camp, who is a

splendid fellow and a perfect soldier as well."

"I met him, sir."

"So you did."

"Then the men are all fine fellows, true as steel, we believed them to be, and even did Warburton go wrong, the sergeant and the soldiers are not the kind to join in his dishonor, so you see how hard it is to believe ill against any of them."

"It is, sir, a hard thing to believe ill against any soldier of our army, and I hope Captain Warburton can clear the clouds away from him which his strange actions have overshadowed him with."

"If he can, I will be only too glad to say I am wrong; but I confess I believe there is something wrong, as it now appears to me; but there comes Scout Madder, and the scout came up at a gallop."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE TWO TRAILS.

Lieutenant Lee and Buffalo Bill had dismounted, while awaiting the return of the two scouts, and their horses were feeding near where they sat under a tree.

Maddern rode up at a gallop and said:

"A mile below, sir, there are some rapids, which nothing could pass following the stream, and there is no trail on either bank."

"Then that settles the matter in that direction."

"We will wait to see what Belt has to report," said the Chief of Scouts.

It was half an hour before Belt returned, and he also came back at a gallop.

"Well, Belt?"

"I went all of three miles up, sir, and could see a long distance further, and there was no obstruction in the bed of the stream."

"If there is any, it is at the range you see yonder, sir."

"There were no trails coming out upon either bank?"

"None, sir."

"And the bed of the river could be followed by wagons?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the depth of the water?"

"About as it is here, sir, as far as I went."

"All right. I am going up the stream alone, the lieutenant will return to camp, and you two will go into camp in yonder thicket, where you can watch this ford."

"Yes, sir."

"How are you off for provisions, Cody?"

"All right, thank you, Lieutenant Lee, for I never leave camp without my saddle roll and camp outfit, with supplies for a week."

"It is well to be prepared, and you are an able general, not to be caught without supplies."

"But now to marking your trail?"

"It will be by a rock turned over here, a broken limb, leaves scattered along, and in various ways my scout friends here can follow as readily as a tenderfoot would a turnpike, sir."

"All right, I'll see that Belt and Maddern are in the lead, for they know your ways now, and can readily follow you, as you say."

"Now, I will go to camp, and luck attend you."

The officer grasped Buffalo Bill's hand, returned the salute of the two scouts, and, crossing the stream, went back over the trail at a canter.

Buffalo Bill went with Maddern and Belt to the thicket, where they were to camp, half a mile from the crossing, and, seeing that they would be all right, he rode on up the stream to the bank.

He reached the spot where Belt had turned back, and pressed on more rapidly, as he desired to reach the shelter of the range several miles ahead before nightfall, and there go into camp.

Keeping his eye on each bank as he rode along, he could find no trace of where the wagons had left the stream, for he was perfectly assured that they had come that way.

The soft sand of course left no traces in the bed of the stream, and only here and there did the banks allow of any wheels coming out or entering the water.

As he was nearing the range Buffalo Bill halted.

He had several times seen a track on the bank that puzzled him.

"That is not a wolf's track, but a dog's," he muttered.

"And here is the trail of a horse coming up out of the bed of the stream."

"I really believe it has been all along on the other bank, and I failed to see it, as also did Belt, for we were looking for wheel tracks."

"Yes, it leads down into the stream from that bank, comes out here, and goes on in my direction."

"But it is an iron-shod track, and of a large horse, I take it, from the size of the hoof and the depth of track that shows weight."

"Yes, and the dog's track follows it along."

"Anyhow, I am not wholly in the dark, for no Indian rode this horse, or had the dog with him."

"The trail, however, is not over fresh, and was made when the wagon train went along, or soon after."

While thus musing, Buffalo Bill had been riding slowly along, watching the trails made by the horse and dog in the soft ground.

Increasing his pace as the sun neared the horizon, he continued on until he reached the base of the range.

Here the stream turned abruptly to the left, following along the base of the range, and its bed was now pebbly.

The trail of the horse and dog was also there, and continued on up the bank of the stream.

"I will hold on a little further, and then camp," said Buffalo Bill, and he picked out ahead a good camping place.

Just as he reached it his eyes saw ahead that there were rapids in the stream.

"They will tell the tale, for no wagons can pass them," he said, as he dashed rapidly up to the rapids.

"And they do tell the trail, for there is the wagon trail."

"It leaves the water here, and there is where it went into camp."

"I'll camp there, too, and it is just what the rider with the dog did, I see," muttered the scout, as he saw the tracks of the horse and dog leading in the same direction.

Riding up into the sheltered nook where the ashes of campfires were visible, Buffalo Bill dismounted, saying as he did so:

"The man with the dog was not with the wagon train, but following it."

CHAPTER XXX.

ON THE TRACK OF BUFFALO BILL.

Back to camp went Lieutenant Lee, and some anxiety was felt by those who saw him returning alone.

He at once went to where Captain Lennox was camping, and saw that the men were making themselves comfortable, having erected wicky-ups for the officers and themselves.

Scouts had been out and killed several deer and turkeys, and the campfires were blazing for the cooks to prepare supper.

A couple of scouts were well out from the camp, to report the coming of any redskins, and guards were watching the horses feeding in the valley, while double sentinels were on duty.

"Well, Lee, glad to see you back."

"But I hope you have no bad news about Cody."

"No, Captain Lennox, good news, rather, for he has discovered what he went to find out, or, rather, I have something to tell you that will surprise you."

"Did you find Warburton?"

"No, sir."

"He certainly went over that range."

"He did, sir."

"His trail is seen all along until it nears a stream, and there it is hidden by the tracks of a herd of buffalo."

"So Warburton did make that wide flank movement to reach the fort, and save for our victory over the Indians at the pass, our expedition is useless."

"Not so, Captain Lennox, for Warburton did not flank around to reach the fort."

"He has not been surprised by Indians?"

"Not that I know of, sir."

"But I'll make my report just as Cody asked me to do."

"And where is he?"

"Off on Warburton's trail."

Then the lieutenant went on to tell his story, from the wiping out of the trail by the buffalo tracks, the following on until the wagon tracks were seen, but coming to Shelter Valley, not going from it.

He told of the tracks showing how the buffalo had been driven over the trail to destroy it, and of the discovery made by Buffalo Bill, that the wagon train could have disappeared but one way, up or down the stream, and by following in its bed.

"It could not go down, as Maddern reported, on account of rapids, while Belt reported the stream clear, he thought, to the range."

"So Cody asked me to return, left his two scouts camped near the crossing, while he went on up the stream, and is to mark his trail."

"Now that seems to show, Lee, that Warburton was bewildered, and hardly knew what to do, for if he has gone in that direction, he will run upon enough Indians to utterly crush him."

"Yes, sir."

"But Cody will travel much faster and overtake him, I hope, in time to turn him back, while he asks that you follow with what force you deem best, starting at daybreak to-morrow."

"I will do so."

"And if the reinforcements from the fort have not arrived, sir, you might leave word for them to halt and await you here."

"Yes, or at the stream where those scouts are encamped, as they would be that much nearer if wanted for a support, or to fall back upon."

"Cody spoke of that, sir, but said that was for you to say."

"I will have them camp there, if there is grass and wood."

"There are both, sir, and the stream close to the camping place."

"I will start to-night then, and camp there, being that much nearer Cody."

"Pardon me, sir, but it is getting time for those Indians on foot to be along, and they would make a desperate effort to overwhelm any small force you left here."

"You are right, Lieutenant Lee, and I'll wait until morning; but I will send a small force on to the camp on the stream, and let them start out on Cody's trail at dawn, for I do not wish him so far ahead alone."

"Can I command that advance, sir?"

"Yes, if you wish."

"I do, sir."

"I am greatly interested in Cody's unraveling of this affair, and wish to see just how he will do it."

"He is a very remarkable man, Lieutenant Lee; but did you hear him express an opinion of Captain Warburton's strange departure, and going from, instead of toward, help?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did he say?"

"That Captain Warburton was flying from his friends, rather than Indians, of whom he must have little fear, to take the trail he has."

"It is beyond my comprehension."

"But I suppose he will be able to explain, when we do find him, if he is not massacred with his men before we do come up with him."

"He will have much to explain, sir."

"Yes, too much, I fear, and you feel as I do, for you, as I, have known the ugly rumors about the fort, and which we tried to keep from Colonel Waring's ears."

"Do you think Cody has heard them?"
 "He has had no opportunity, sir; but he has drawn his own conclusions from what he has discovered."

"Well, Lee, what do you think?"

"I hardly dare express myself, captain."

"We will wait for further developments."

"It is best."

"And, captain, Buffalo Bill asked me to have you open those graves and see just what was within them."

"It shall be done at once."

"Yes, sir, for as I go on in advance, I should like to know so as to report to Cody what is in them, should I overtake him."

Captain Lennox at once sent a squad of men to open the graves, while Lieutenant Lee prepared for his change of camps, and selected a sergeant, corporal, and fourteen men to accompany him, saying he would also take along the Scouts Maddern and Belt, as there would be no reason of their staying longer at the fort.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE ADVANCE GUARD.

For the second time the bodies of Donald Ellis and those with him were taken from their graves.

As the soldiers dug down to the bodies, they found that they had been buried with great care, and the officers watching the work so remarked upon the care taken in the burial of them.

It was an unpleasant task, this removing of the dead who had been in their graves for several days, but it was a duty that was done without a murmur, and each body was looked at and particulars regarding it jotted down by Captain Lennox, while Lieutenant Basil Lee made a copy for Buffalo Bill.

The work finished, the graves refilled, Lieutenant Lee ate his supper, and with his men and a week's supplies carried on a pack horse, started for the camp of the scouts upon the stream, nearly ten miles away.

It was night when the ford was reached, but as they entered the stream a form suddenly appeared on the bank and approached Lieutenant Lee.

"I am Scout Maddern, sir."

"I saw you coming, and at first thought you were Indians, for I heard no jingle of sabre and spurs."

"No, we saw to it that we should move as quietly as we could, Maddern."

"But, where is your camp?"

"Over in the timber there, sir, and Belt is there, but the chief left, you know, for his lone trail up the river."

"Yes, I know."

"And we are to follow him at daylight, so will go into camp now."

"And I will remain on duty here, sir?"

"Oh, no, there is no need of it."

"You and Belt both go with me, as you need rest."

"I am glad to find you on the watch, as you were."

"They were the chief's orders, sir."

"And you obeyed them to the letter."

"Where is your horse?"

"In camp, sir."

The lieutenant rode on toward the camp, Maddern walking by the side of his horse and his men following.

It was very dark, for the new moon had set half an hour before, and, approaching the timber, suddenly was heard sharp and clear:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

"Friends from the fort!"

"Halt, or I fire—"

"Hold on, Belt, it is all right," cried Maddern, quickly, and he added:

"It is Lieutenant Lee and his men."

"I beg pardon, sir."

"I was asleep, heard you coming, and not having time to get away with our horses, played a bluff."

"I was not looking for troopers to come, so did not know just what I had to face."

"You did right, Belt, and, with your pard, Maddern, can be fully depended

upon, for many men, after the hard service you have seen the last few days, would have rested instead of being on the alert."

"But we are here to camp with you for the night, and follow Chief Cody, in the morning."

"I certainly am glad to hear that, sir, for I feel anxious about Mr. Cody."

"Well, I would if it was any one else, but he has a way of taking care of himself that is very remarkable."

"Now, men, turn in, for you need all the rest you can get," said the officer, and the men unsaddled their horses, staked them out with those of the scouts, and spread their blankets.

"Don't you think I had better stand guard, sir, and Belt can relieve me?" asked Maddern of Lieutenant Lee.

"I do not think there is any need of it, Maddern, but if you wish you can do so, though I will not put you on duty."

"Well, sir, I have got to return to the crossing for my blankets, for I was lying down when I heard you coming, and left them there."

"All right, go ahead, and stand guard if you wish, awaking me to relieve you at midnight."

"Yes, sir," replied Maddern, but as he walked off toward the ford, he muttered to himself:

"I'll wake Belt to relieve me, not you, Lieutenant Lee, for we can stand it better than you can, and then an officer who is willing like you to spare his men, is the kind that I like."

With his long, swing stride, Maddern walked off on his way to the ford, where he had left his blankets by a small tree, for, as he had said, he had been lying down until he heard the approach of hoofs, and in joining the lieutenant had forgotten them.

With no dread of danger near, he approached the stream, and was just about to pick up his blankets, when suddenly a lasso settled over his head, and he was dragged forward over the edge of the bank, down ten feet to the sand below.

So unexpected and quickly carried out was the attack upon him that he had not time to resist, and before he could utter a cry for help a hand was upon his throat, and a revolver shoved hard into his face, while he heard the low threat:

"Give an alarm, and it will be the last utterance of your life."

Who his captors were Scout Maddern did not know, but he did know enough to obey the order given him and not throw his life away.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A MAN MISSING.

Lieutenant Basil Lee awoke at midnight and looked about him.

It was too dark to see the time by his watch, and he did not care to strike a match.

But he knew that it was about the hour when Maddern should have called him, for he had trained himself to wake up at the hour for duty.

Rising from his blanket bed, he saw that the whole camp was lost in sleep.

He remembered where Belt had spread his blankets, and walking there he saw a form lying fast asleep.

"It is doubtless Maddern, for he called Belt instead of waking me up."

"I will look up Belt and take his place," and the kind-hearted lieutenant made the rounds of the camp.

But he found no guard on duty.

Surprised, after what Maddern had said, he went to where the horses were.

All was quiet among them, but there was no one on guard near them.

Back to the camp he went, and then concluding that the scout had taken his position at the crossing of the stream, nearly a quarter of a mile away, he walked there.

But no one was visible, all was silent.

He looked among the scattering trees and bushes, but saw no sign of the scout.

The lieutenant could not understand it. Then he thought that after all Maddern

had turned in for the night, believing, as he had, there was no reason for a guard, for did any one cross the stream it would arouse the sleepers very quickly.

But only one form lay where he had seen Belt wrap himself in his blankets and lie down.

"I do not wish to disturb the men, and he is doubtless among them, or he is scouting about the camp."

"He will doubtless arouse me when he returns," and with this the lieutenant returned to his blankets.

He quickly dropped off to sleep, but after a couple of hours awoke again.

Then he lighted a match and looked at his watch.

It told him that in a couple of hours it would be dawn.

Quickly he arose, wondering why Maddern had not called him.

Again he made the round of the camp, and visited the horses.

He saw no one.

Returning, he called to Belt to get up. The scout was on his feet in an instant.

"Have you seen Maddern?"

"No, sir."

"He was to stand guard the first part of the night, and then call me."

"It must be getting near to daybreak, sir."

"It is."

"Did he not call you, sir?"

"No, I awoke about midnight, and made the rounds, going to the ford, but could not find him."

"He is scouting around somewhere, sir."

"So I believed."

"But I do not understand his long absence."

"He told me he was going to the ford after his blankets, lieutenant."

"Yes, so he told me."

"But I could find nothing there."

"I'll have a look around, sir."

"Do so."

For half an hour Belt was gone, the officer awaiting his return anxiously.

"I can find nothing of him, sir, and it almost scares me, for it is not like Maddern to leave camp this way."

"I will arouse the camp, have breakfast, and be ready to start with the first glimmer of dawn, and see if we can find him."

The men were called, campfires were soon shedding a ruddy glow through the timber, the horses were bridled and saddled, and breakfast was gotten ready and disposed of.

Belt had saddled his pard's horse, for the scout was still missing.

Just as the east grew bright Lieutenant Lee gave the order to mount, and a search was made through the timber, as it was feared some accident might have befallen Maddern.

But he could not be found.

Then the lieutenant led the way, to the ford, just as the sun was rising.

The blankets of the scout were not there, but the keen eye of Belt detected that the bank had caved in in one place, and ten feet below, on the sand, were the tracks of men and horses.

They led out of the stream upon the sand, and then back into the water.

"That is Maddern's track among a thousand!"

"I'll swear to it, for he had the smallest foot of any man in the fort," said Belt.

Then he began to look for "signs," and the result was that he said:

"Here is where his blankets were, sir, and it is my opinion that men were hidden under this bank and lassoed him, for you see something was dragged along here."

"Yes, that is certain."

"And it broke off the bank when pulled over just here."

"Yes."

"Now, if he was captured, and I have no doubt he was, when he came here to get his blankets, whoever his captors were took him up the stream, for they could not ride down it."

"It is strange we did not hear the horses in the water."

"Not under the bank, sir, as they were, and they went very slowly, you may be sure."

"There are the tracks of two horses on the sand there and of three men."

"One of the three trails is Maddern's."

"There might have been more horses in the stream."

"But I am sure they went up instead of down, though we can scout around and see."

The men scattered to look for trails, but none were found in the half hour's search.

Then the lieutenant gave the order to march, and, dividing his force, they went up the stream, and upon either bank.

After half an hour's ride they came to a halt.

Belt had made a discovery.

It was where two horses had come out of the water and continued on along the banks.

"We are on their trail, sir, for these are the tracks of the same horses that made those in the sand at the ford," said Belt.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE ROUND-UP RIDERS.

The sudden wrench to his neck, the hard fall, and being dragged along and over the bank was enough to stun any man, and it was no wonder that Maddern was compelled to surrender.

For a few moments he was unconscious, but he quickly rallied, to find himself gagged and bound.

Then he was made to mount behind one of his captors, the other stepping upon the bank and going to the tree to see what the scout had gone there for.

The blankets were found, were rolled up, and taken along, the men keeping their horses in the stream and moving very slowly.

The scout saw that there were but two, and they were bearded and wore long hair, while they were heavily armed.

They said but little to each other, and then spoke only in whispers.

That they must know of the existence of the soldiers so near was shown by their remarkable quiet, and the caution with which they rode through the water.

Just who they were the scout could not guess.

After a ride in the bed of the stream of a couple of miles, they turned out at a break in the bank, and rode on dry ground, seemingly not deeming it necessary to further cover up their tracks.

Continuing on for a few miles further, they halted among some willows on the stream; and, while one gathered wood and made a fire, the other staked the horses out to feed.

The scout, still bound hands and feet, was lying upon the ground, but the gag had been removed from his mouth, the man removing it remarking:

"I don't want to choke yer, at least not yet, so I'll take this out, fer if yer did tune up nobody w'u'd hear yer now."

When a fire was built, the man put on it a coffee pot, and began to fry some bacon and a venison steak in a pan.

Breakfast ready, the scout was given something to eat, which he declined, though he did take a cup of coffee.

When the men had finished eating, the scout watching them well as they sat in the firelight, one of them said:

"Now, pard, who and what is yer?"

"Who are you, I'd like to know, that has acted the part of outlaws?" asked Maddern.

"Never mind who we is, for we has this call on you."

"But, do you talk if yer knows what's good fer yer?"

Not wishing to make more trouble for himself, Maddern replied:

"I am a scout from Fort Fenton."

"You was guidin' a command as was camped in the timber near the ford."

Seeing that they knew this much, the scout answered:

"Where had you come from?"

"The fort."

"Where were you going?"

"Scouting for Indians."

"Who said Injuns was around?"

"I say so."

"Whar did yer see 'em?"

"They attacked a train in Shelter Valley three days ago, and killed the whole outfit."

"Lordy! We didn't know that."

"A command was sent out from the fort, and we met them at the Rocky Gate Pass, and did them up, capturing all of their ponies."

"We came on then to scout after those that had fled on foot."

"Now, I ask you who you are, and if you don't think you have made a mistake in treating an army scout as you have?"

"We hain't made no mistake, no."

"We seen you on ther range jist at nightfall, as we was coming along ther ridge trail, and we hev a camp in Shelter Valley."

"We followed yer, fer this way was our trail, and we seen yer coming to ther ford, so roped yer in."

"No, we hain't made no mistake."

"Who are you?"

"Has yer ever heerd tell of ther Round-up Riders?"

"Yes."

"What has yer heerd good of 'em?"

"Nothing, only bad, for they are a lawless band that have a devil for a leader, and—"

"That's our captain, Captain Nero we calls him, and he is ther devil of a feller as yer says."

"And you admit that you are outlaws?"

"We is Round-up Riders, yes."

"Then you belong to a band of cutthroats that deserve hanging, and I really thought you had been wiped out, as we have not heard of your evil deeds for some time past."

"No, we is enjoying good health, thanks, though yer did crowd us to the wall, and some of our men got taken with ther rope fever."

"But you'll find we hain't dead yet, and as turn about is fair play, we'll take you to our camp and jist string you up, for we is gunnin' fer jist sich men as you be."

Maddern did not flinch under the threat, but calmly remarked:

"I have seen too many brave men die to shrink from what they had to face."

"Well, you is game, that's sart'in, or leastwise yer sings that way now."

"But wait until we gits yer facin' ther death music and see if yer still crows loud."

The scout made no reply, and soon after the men saddled their horses and started on their way, the prisoner riding behind the other man now.

They had not gone very far before dawn began to appear, and as they were passing through a narrow ravine there came a sudden change in the situation, and which was decidedly in favor of Maddern, the scout.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BUFFALO BILL LYING IN WAIT.

Buffalo Bill had certainly found the lost wagon train and its guard.

There was the trail where the wagons had pulled out of the stream and gone into the camp on the slope of the hill.

The ashes of the camp fires were cold, and the coyotes had picked the bones clean, showing that the train was still well ahead.

But why had Captain Warburton pushed on in that direction?

Why had an officer who had said he had just escaped from a siege by Indians taken a way that would lead him back into danger again?

Why had he fled from safety to what would apparently be certain death?

For a while, after reaching the camp, and noting that the wagon trail from there led still further on toward the

land of the redskins, the thought came to Buffalo Bill that after all Captain Warburton and his men must have been captured or killed by Indians, and they were taking the wagons and their prisoners, or the dead bodies, to their villages.

But a search of the camp showed the well trained scout that not one Indian had been in that camp.

The scout built a fire in a crevice of the rocks, staked his horse out in the little glen, and set to work to get his supper.

This over with he put out the fire, spread his blankets, and turned in for a comfortable night's rest.

But he awoke soon after midnight, but from what cause he could not say.

He arose and went to see if his horse was safe.

The animal was all right.

Looking about the camp, for he felt sure something had disturbed him, he caught sight of the glimmer of a light down the valley.

He was looking over a ridge and could just see it, and it appeared to be over a mile off.

Returning to his blankets he saw that the light was visible from there.

"It was that light in my face that aroused me."

"The fire was just lighted, I guess, or flared up, for I did not see it when I got up."

"Now to see what it means?"

The scout took his rifle and started out on foot to investigate.

He lost sight of the fire until he came to a break in a ridge, and then saw it again.

The fire was now not half a mile away and burning brightly.

As he drew near he went more cautiously, and approached within a hundred feet of it under shelter of the bank of the stream.

He saw three men seated about the fire, and one he instantly recognized as Maddern, the scout.

The others he did not know, but, judging them to be other scouts from the fort, whom he was not acquainted with, and who with Maddern had come on after him, he was just about to call out to them when fortunately his eyes fell upon the ropes on the hands and feet of the prisoner.

Instantly he crouched down again and attentively regarded the scene for some minutes.

There was no doubt in his mind that Maddern was in bad hands.

With caution he began to retreat, and was soon walking briskly back to camp.

He had already decided what he would do, and just how it should be done.

Back to camp he went, and securing his lariat from off his saddle horn, he hurried back on the ridge.

Here he made one end of the lariat fast to a pine bush and crouching behind it awaited the coming of Maddern and his captors, who would come right through that ravine unless they took to the bed of the stream, which they were not likely to do, he was sure.

He waited with the patience of an Indian, a patience gained by long and most arduous training.

He waited, too, with the calm indifference of a man to whom danger was a daily companion.

At last the east began to lighten, and he felt that those for whom he waited would soon be along.

Their going into camp, as they had so near daybreak, was proof that it was only for a temporary rest, that they would soon be on their way again, especially as they had a prisoner with them.

That Maddern had been taken gave Buffalo Bill the idea that his comrade, Belt, had been killed, and he was anxious to rescue the one and avenge the other.

Who the two captors were he did not know; did not care, so long as they held his comrade, a brother scout, a prisoner and securely bound.

At last Buffalo Bill, passing through

the foliage of the little bush, saw the three coming, and he prepared for the ordeal before him.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE SITUATION REVERSED.

The preparations of Buffalo Bill to rescue his companion from captivity were quickly made.

They would have to pass just a few feet below his position, and not thirty feet distant from him.

He saw as they came near in the uncertain light that there appeared to be but two horsemen.

Had his comrade been killed?

Had he been allowed to go free?

Where was his horse?

He had not noticed that there were but two horses, when he recognized Maddern by the light of the camp fire.

It would not do to let those men pass even if Maddern had been released.

They would run up on his camp.

No, he must challenge them at least and make them account for themselves.

His lariat was ready to whirl and throw, his rifle lay ready for his grasp, and he could draw a revolver in an instant.

The men were coming straight toward him, and his eyes were fixed searchingly upon them.

The light was yet uncertain, but the presence of his companion was suddenly revealed by one of the men accidentally dropping his hat.

"Say, Dave, I can't git off easy with this feller behind me, so you jist pick up my hat."

Buffalo Bill heard every word that was said.

Instantly he knew the truth, that his comrade was riding behind one of the men, the one who had dropped his hat.

With a growl the other got down and picking up the hat followed on.

The horse bearing two was now within reach of the scout's lasso, and it was already making its deadly circles to be thrown.

Another second and the noose was launched straight for the head of the horse.

The aim was true, the animal was caught, and, bounding forward, was brought to a halt with a suddenness that made the lariat twang like a harp string.

The horse was dragged back upon his haunches, and the two riders were nearly unseated.

Buffalo Bill did not wait to see the result of his throw.

He knew what the result was, and instantly called out:

"Halt!"

"Hands up, both of you!"

The man who had picked up the hat had realized that his companion was caught, and hastily drawing a revolver, while he whirled his horse about as though he was on a pivot, he fired toward the scout.

Another weapon flashed almost at the same instant, and the man fell headlong from his saddle, clutching his bridle rein in his death agony and thus bringing his horse to a standstill.

In the meantime the other outlaw had drawn his knife and was leaning forward to sever the lariat when Buffalo Bill called out:

"Drop that knife or you are a dead man!"

As the scout spoke the man fell from his saddle, for, bound as he was, Maddern had raised his hands and dealt his captor a stunning blow on the back of the neck that felled him as though he had been shot.

"Ho, chief, you've got them!" cried Maddern, as Buffalo Bill came bounding down into the ravine, and bent over the man lying nearest to him.

"Well done, Maddern, for you saved me from killing him, though of course I did not intend to fire with you behind, him as you were."

"He's only stann'd, sir, so look out for

him, as he may be playing possum, you know, and I'm tied to the saddle here."

Buffalo Bill bent over the man, unbuckled his belt of arms, searched him for other weapons, and then took the rope from off Maddern and bound him securely.

He then told Maddern to go upon the ridge and release his lariat from the tree, while he walked to where the other outlaw lay.

"He is stone dead," he said as he felt his pulse, and then added:

"But he has a death grip upon the bridle rein and holds his horse."

Placing the body across the saddle he led the horse up to where Maddern awaited him, the outlaw, having recovered consciousness, sitting upon the ground.

"We'll mount him on this horse, pard, and go to camp," said Buffalo Bill, and untying the legs of the man he put him in the saddle as he might have done a child.

Then leading the horse, while Maddern led the animal bearing the dead body, the scout started off for his little camp just as the sun peered over the eastern horizon.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SCOUT MADDERN ON GUARD.

Arriving at his camp, Buffalo Bill placed the dead outlaw by a tree, folding his hands devoutly upon his breast, while Maddern set to work to gather wood and build up the fire.

Thus far not a question had been asked by Buffalo Bill as to why he found Maddern a prisoner, and the outlaw sat silent and malignant-faced gazing at the man who had so quickly changed his triumph of the night before into a fatal defeat.

Having put the two horses, both very fine ones, out with his own, Buffalo Bill returned to the camp fire and said:

"Well, pard, who are your friends?"

"Have you ever heard of the Round-up Riders, chief?"

"Yes, as a band of cutthroats."

"Well, they told me they belonged to that band."

"Then that fellow had better been shot, for he'll be sure to hang."

"I never said it."

"He lies, pard, fer I is a honest man," cried the prisoner.

"Then your looks sadly belie you."

"That man tried to take us in, and we jist got ther best of him."

Maddern laughed and said:

"Yes, you did get the best of me I'll admit, for they lassoed me, chief."

"And Belt?" asked Buffalo Bill, suddenly.

"He's safe, sir."

"I'm glad to hear that, for I feared they had killed him."

"No, sir, I was the only one caught, and I'll tell you how it was."

This Maddern did, and Buffalo Bill listened attentively and said:

"Lieutenant Lee is very kind to come after me, and it is just as well to have him within call if I should need him."

"The party will doubtless be along in a few hours, so I'll leave you here with the prisoner and the dead body, as soon as we have breakfast."

"Had I not best go with you, sir, for we can tie the fellow so he'll be here when the lieutenant arrives?"

"No, I will push on alone, and I'll tell you before I go how I'll work my trail so the lieutenant will understand just what to do."

"Yes, sir."

"And you can say for him from Buffalo Bill that he intends to find the end of this trail he has started upon."

As Buffalo Bill uttered his own name the prisoner started and looked fixedly at him.

Then he asked with great earnestness: "Did you call yerself Buf'ler Bill?"

"Yes."

"Is you Buf'ler Bill?"

"I am."

"William F. Cody?"

"Yes."

"I thought you was stationed down at Fort Flagstaff?"

"So I am."

"What is you doing up here?"

"I came on business."

"Well, I has heard a heap of you, Buf'ler Bill, but never seen yer afore, and I is durned sorry I sees yer now, fer they tells me thet you hev sounded ther death-knells of more men than any other man of ther plains, and I guess its so, from ther clever way yer picked off my pard and lariatated me."

"I do not like the name of being a man-killer, but just such as you are, lawless and merciless men, have caused me to win a record I would gladly not bear," said Buffalo Bill with some show of annoyance at what the man had said.

Seeing this Maddern remarked:

"Lieutenant Lee will take this man off of your hands, chief, for he is a terror to outlaws, and Colonel Waring has ordered that the Round-up Riders are to be shown no mercy, after their red deeds of a year ago."

"But breakfast is ready, sir."

Buffalo Bill at once took the bonds off the prisoner's hands, but he said he was not hungry, and ate but little.

The meal finished, the prisoner was securely bound again, and Buffalo Bill walked apart with Maddern, who said:

"You saved my life, chief, for those fellows intended to kill me I am sure."

"Perhaps not; but you will have the chance while alone with him to get from him information that may prove of importance to us, and I leave you to get him to tell who and what he is, and his life might be spared if he would put us on the track of capturing the balance of his band."

"His going in this direction is proof that their retreat is somewhere here; but you know what to say to him, so I leave it to you."

"Now, I'll go on ahead, and if you see that I have marked the trail frequently come on rapidly."

"If I mark it far apart, it will mean go slow, and if you find a line drawn across it, halt in the nearest camping place until I return to you."

"Yes, sir, I'll explain this to Lieutenant Lee."

"Do so," and soon after Buffalo Bill mounted his splendid black horse and rode away, following the wagon trail, while the face of the prisoner brightened with his going.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE REFUSAL.

"Say, pard, yer don't want ter see a feller roped, does yer?" asked the prisoner as he watched Buffalo Bill disappear up the valley following the wagon trail.

"That depends," was the answer of Maddern, indifferently.

"Upon what?"

"Whether he deserves to be hanged or not."

"Well, I don't."

"I only take your own word for it that you do."

"How so?"

"You confessed to being a Round-up."

"I was joking."

"It will be rather a serious joke to you when Lieutenant Lee comes along."

"Lordy!"

"Does yer think he'll murder me?"

"Oh, no."

"What then?"

"Hang you according to military law."

"My goodness!"

"I hain't guilty."

"Of what?"

"Nothin'."

"Then you ought to be hanged, for a man who has done nothing all his life deserves hanging."

"My Lord!"

"You and your pard attacked me, risked killing me when you lassoed me, and intended to take me to your camp."

where I would have been shot by your lawless leader beyond a doubt.

"You confessed that you belonged to the Round-up Riders, and that alone should hang you."

"And Buffalo Bill kilt my pard and lassoed me."

"Very true."

"He saw me bound and a prisoner, and that told him who you were."

"Well, say, I see you is ag'in' me, so there's no need of argifyin' ther p'int any more than there be politics and religion, so I'll tell yer what I has ter say."

"Well."

"I don't wan ter hang."

"Few men do."

"I wants ter git free."

"You are away off in your ambition."

"I've got money."

"You ought to have since you have been a Round-up Rider for a long time."

"I didn't steal what I has."

"No, you killed your man before you picked his pocket."

"No, I got it out of ther ground."

"And put many a poor devil into the ground to get it."

"No, I didn't."

"But I've got it."

"Where?"

"At my camp."

"As your pard did not have even the photograph of a dollar on him I was wondering how he could be traveling with a man of wealth."

"I has money in my camp, hid away thar."

"Well."

"I'd rather live poor than die rich."

"Well?"

"I'll give up if you'll let me go."

"How much have you got?"

"Several thousand pieces."

"And you are going to make me your heir?"

"Say, pard, don't talk that way, fer yer gives me ther shudders."

"What then?"

"I mean I was going ter give yer ther dust ter let me go."

"Money talks."

"Well, I'll go git it."

"I don't see it."

"You kin go with me."

"I'd rather not."

"I'm all right as I am."

"Thar hain't no one thar, now my pard is kilt."

"See here, I'll come to business."

"Well?"

"You belong to the Round-up Riders."

"I don't say it?"

"Never mind, I know it."

"You guide me to your retreat and let us capture the whole Round-up outfit, and your life shall be spared."

The man turned deadly pale.

"Will you?"

No answer.

"What do you say?"

"Betray the outfit and save my life?"

"Yes."

"Pard, yer don't know what yer says."

"Why?"

"If I did sich a thing I'd die sure."

"Not if the band was captured or killed."

"Yer don't understand."

"What will you do?"

"I'll take you to where my dust is hid, give it ter you, and you is ter let me go free."

"You could not bribe me with any such sum."

"If I'd steal a large sum I would pick a man's pocket, and to accept a bribe is no more than thieving."

"No, Round-up, I am not built that way, thank God."

"Then I hangs?"

"Unless you turn State's evidence against your vile gang of cutthroats."

"I don't dare do it."

"Then it's a case for the rope."

"You won't farn nothin' by hangin' me."

"No, but we'd get rid of a Round-up Rider."

"Pard, I tell yer I don't dare, fer we don't know in ther band who is square and who is not."

"And then all hain't thar that belongs, while our law is thet ther man who betrays his comrades has ter be burned ter death at ther stake!"

"My God!"

"Is this true?"

"It is, and I'd rather hang than live in fear of sich a fate."

"Pard scout, we can't trade unless you does as I tells yer, fer I'll give up my dust, but I'll dio by ther rope afore I turns traitor, and thet goes."

Maddern talked much longer with the man, but all to no purpose.

He would not turn traitor to the Round-up Riders.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WITH SEALED LIPS.

Three hours after the departure of Buffalo Bill, Belt appeared in sight of the little camp, while close behind him came Lieutenant Lee and his men.

They quickly caught sight of the camp, and rode toward Maddern, whom they saw awaiting them.

"Well, Maddern, I am indeed glad to see you safe, for we feared the worst for you," cried Lieutenant Lee.

"I am all right, sir, thank you, but I owe it to Chief Cody that I am."

"Ah!"

"You have seen Cody, then?"

"He left here several hours ago, sir."

"And whom have you there?"

"A dead man and a prisoner, sir."

"Who are they?"

"Round-up Riders."

"Good!"

"They were your captors, for your pard Belt has studied out how you disappeared most cleverly."

"I'll tell you how it was, lieutenant, and how Chief Cody chipped in just at the right time to save me."

"It is a way he has of doing, Maddern."

"But to your story."

The story was told, all listening with deep interest, and in concluding Maddern told of his trying to make terms with the outlaw, and his failure.

"All right, we'll see if we can encourage him to tell, for we need not start from here until after noon, as Cody is not so far ahead," said the officer.

With this he rode on to the camp, ordered his men to strip their horses, and let them have a good rest and feed, and they would all have dinner before going on.

The lieutenant decided also that he would send a courier back to the ford, where Captain Lennox was doubtless then encamped, and suggest that he should send an advance guard to camp where he then was, as there was a prisoner there, and a dead man to be cared for, while Buffalo Bill had found the wagon trail and was following it, and he, Lee, would follow on after Cody.

A note was written and the courier, the corporal of the little command, mounted one of the outlaw's horses, to spare his own, and dashed away upon the return trail, Lieutenant Lee saying to Maddern:

"With a force here, the captain at the ford, and the reinforcements from the fort encamped in Shelter Valley, we will have a communicating line of considerable strength, and Cody will be well supported, for we will be between him and this point."

"Yes, sir, there'll be over three hundred men within a few hours' call," replied Maddern, and then he asked:

"Will you talk with the prisoner, now, sir?"

"Yes."

The lieutenant walked to where lay the dead outlaw, and Maddern drew back the blanket that was spread over the form.

"I do not recall having seen him."

"Call the men to see if any of them recognize him."

The men passed silently by, but not one recognized the dead man or the prisoner.

The latter looked very anxious under the scrutiny, and cast furtive glances into the face of Lieutenant Lee, as though to read there what his fate was to be.

"Well, my man, you have gotten into trouble at last," said the officer.

"I didn't do nothin', sir, fer that scout lies."

"I have always found him most truthful, and I believe his story."

"That hangs me, I s'pose."

"Your own acts condemn you, and I am but the executioner who carries out the order that all Round-up Riders are to be shown no mercy."

"Hain't I ter be tried?"

"Your acts have condemned you, and I must obey orders."

"Not now! Oh, not now!" cried the man.

"I will give you just half an hour in which to ask forgiveness for your crimes, and if such as you can do so, to pray to your Maker."

"Don't kill me!"

"Your life will be spared upon one condition."

"What is it, quick, tell me!"

"That you atone for the evil you have done by aiding me to wipe out the red-handed band to which you belong."

"No! No! No!"

"I cannot do that!"

"Then I must do my duty," and the officer turned away.

In just half an hour the men were called together, a lariat served as a rope, and a rock for a platform, a tree for a gallows.

The doomed man was placed on the rock, his hands and feet bound, the noose was put about his neck, and all stood ready for his execution.

"Will you save your life or not?"

"I dare not."

"I will die with lips sealed," was the strangely firm response.

Lieutenant Lee was surprised, and, of course, not intending to hang the man, but to frighten him into a confession, he said:

"I will give you another respite, leaving Captain Lennox to decide your fate."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ON THE WAGON TRAIL.

The lieutenant and his men could not but admire the pluck of the man who would die rather than betray his companions.

"It must be a terrible hold, indeed, that keeps a man's lips sealed in the face of what he believes certain death," said Lieutenant Lee to Scout Maddern, and the latter remarked:

"I'll tell you what it is, sir."

"The doom of betrayal is to burn at the stake, and he told me nothing could save him, for the wiping out of the band in the retreat would be but half the work, as that would not include the secret agents and spies of the lawless organization."

"So much more reason why such a band should be wiped out," was the reply.

Dinner was ready just at noon, and soon after the order was given to prepare for the march.

Belt and two soldiers were to be left in the camp in charge of the prisoner to await the arrival of the force Captain Lennox should send, and then with the corporal they were to follow rapidly on and overtake the lieutenant, who did not care to curtail the number he had started with.

As the party reached the wagon trail where it left the stream, Lieutenant Lee said:

"Buffalo Bill was right, and I know of no one else who would have come this far to find where the trail left the bed of the stream, while it shows that the

determination of Captain Warburton was to cover up his tracks."

"Yes, sir, and he must have known of some band of Indians he thought would pursue, that we have not discovered."

The lieutenant did not at once reply. But he cast a quick glance at the scout to see if he was hinting to find out if the lieutenant knew why Captain Warburton had come that way.

At last he said:

"Is there not a trail along the range ahead, Maddern, that Captain Warburton could have taken and flanked around again into Shelter Valley?"

"Yes, sir, he could take it to the trail that comes down into Shelter Valley near where our camp is there, but wagons could not go that way, and, besides, he would have to run along the border of the Indian country for a long distance to take it, and after all burn his wheel outfit."

"You are sure there are no trail wheels could follow back into Shelter Valley?"

"I know of none, sir, and, more, the one Captain Warburton would have to take is the very one the Indians will retreat by through Shelter Valley, so they would meet them."

"You mean the Indians we fought and dismounted?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, Cody will find out why Captain Warburton retreated this way."

"I hope so, sir, for it looks as though the Indians must have captured the outfit, and have killed all of the men, or have them prisoners."

"But we saw no traces of Indians."

"No, sir, but at the ford the buffalo herd wiped out all tracks, and it might have been there."

Lieutenant Lee at once jumped at this straw of comfort.

He would far rather have his brother officer and his men utterly wiped out by redskins than know that the whispers about Captain Warburton and his command were true.

As they progressed on their way, the officer continuing to ride ahead with the scout, the marks of Buffalo Bill were readily seen.

Here he had broken a limb off a tree, there stripped a switch of leaves, and in other places scattered leaves along.

This was done only where the nature of the ground was too hard to show the tracks.

The indication of the signs was that they should go slow, and Maddern was governed by this.

The lieutenant was pleased at not having to quicken their pace, as he wished the corporal, Belt, and the two soldiers to catch up by night time.

After regarding the trail most carefully, Maddern finally said:

"There were dogs with the train, Lieutenant Lee, for I see their tracks, and there were cattle as well, while in the camp we left I saw sheep and hog tracks, which were let out of the wagons to feed."

"You scouts are great readers of signs, Maddern."

"We will all give in to Buffalo Bill, sir, for he is the best I ever saw, and he is teaching us lots we never dreamed of."

"But here is a good night camp, sir, and it is growing dark."

"Then here we camp, and—there come our men now," and, as the officer spoke, Belt was seen with a brother scout riding by his side, while the corporal and the two soldiers followed not far behind.

CHAPTER XL.

THE CAPTAIN'S LETTER.

The camp was a good one, and by dark the soldiers had made themselves and their horses comfortable.

The scout with Belt had dispatches for the lieutenant, and was to return to Captain Lennox the next morning with what news there was to send back.

Lieutenant Lee sought his camp fire, which was apart from the others, and by its light read what Captain Lennox had written.

He first paid a compliment to Buffalo Bill for his rescue of Scout Maddern and also for having discovered the wagon train.

Then he went on to state that the retreating Indians on foot had made a desperate dash upon his camp in Shelter Valley to capture their horses and gain revenge, but had been beaten off with considerable loss and gone on toward the mountain, where they would be sure to meet Captain Warburton, who was retreating around that way.

The reinforcements had arrived from the fort, consisting of a troop of cavalry, two guns, and two companies of mounted infantry, with half a dozen scouts.

This force, save a company of mounted infantry and the two guns, would remain in the Shelter Valley camp, while a troop of cavalry and one gun would be left at the ford camp, the remainder coming on with him to the spot where they then were.

This would give him a gun, two troops of cavalry, and a company of mounted infantry, and, with the two other camps, two hundred men more to call upon, or fall back upon as the case might be, and the lieutenant was to so report to Buffalo Bill, who would then know what he could look to in case of an Indian advance in force.

The captain further stated that he had sent back to the fort to ask for two more guns, and as many more men as could be spared to come to Rocky Pass, where the Indian ambush had been thwarted by Buffalo Bill and the wounded had been sent.

The dead outlaw had been buried, and the prisoner would be held in camp to make another attempt to wring from him his secret.

In concluding the captain wrote:

"My scouts who know the country ahead say that the wagons can be taken to the Indian village, and there is hope that Warburton may after all be a prisoner and the redskins have the train."

"The scouts also say that Warburton can flank around along the base of the mountain range back to Shelter Valley, but that he would have to leave his wagons at the ridge overlooking the valley, for only horses could go down, and it is hard work for them."

"If, however, Warburton is taking that trail the scouts say he will surely meet those desperate Indians retreating on foot, and they will overwhelm him, for they can corral him while they send to their village for help."

"Just how far ahead of Buffalo Bill the wagon train now is, I do not know; but I hope that he can overtake Warburton and turn him back, for then, if pursued, he has your force, mine here, the one at the ford, and the other in Shelter Valley to protect him, and all of us, with the reserve at Rocky Pass, can defeat any force the Indians can bring into the field."

"If important news transpires send me a courier at once, for I shall keep a line of several scouts between you and my camp."

"Allow me to congratulate you, in concluding, upon your very able management of the advance guard, and to Buffalo Bill convey my perfect satisfaction with what he is doing."

Such was the long letter of Captain Lennox, who as senior captain at the fort was Acting Major.

Lieutenant Lee at once wrote his reply, stated that he would push ahead, rapidly or slowly, according to the "signs," agreed upon with Buffalo Bill, and if he communicated with the Chief of Scouts he would urge the necessity of catching up with Captain Warburton before he should meet the retreating Indians on foot.

This letter was given to the captain's scout to start back with at daybreak, and, after a hearty supper, sentinels were

placed and the lieutenant and his men turned in early to get all the rest they could.

It was just the peep of day when all were in the saddle again, and the scout courier starting back for the headquarters' camp, Lieutenant Lee, with both Maddern and Belt ahead, pushed out on the trail of the wagon train, and now so well marked by Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER XLI.

TRAILING TO DOOM.

The reader who has kindly followed my pen trail thus far has seen how much of life, hardship, and suffering the massacre of the emigrant train in Shelter Valley has occasioned.

He has seen a family wiped out, save a young girl, whose fate remains in mystery, while a number of faithful negroes, men, women, and children, perished with the white family they had clung to.

The reader has been led to his own conclusions regarding Captain Warburton and his men, whose red deed is buried in deepest mystery.

It has been seen that the massacre, for such it was, caused the Indian battle fought at Rocky Pass, and the loss of redskins and soldiers.

Then, too, it has been seen that there was one survivor of the Donald Ellis train who was not in the camp to share the fate of the others.

This survivor was the noble negro Don, dressed like a Mexican, with the equipment of a wealthy cavalier upon his horse, the latter being an animal it was hard to match.

It has been seen how the mourning negro cared for the dead, and how upon their graves vowed revenge upon the slayers of those he loved, while, not finding the body of sweet Myrtle Ellis with the others, he felt sure she had become a captive of the outlaws, and another vow was registered by the faithful Don that he should be as surely rescued as her family should be avenged.

That luck favored Don in finding the things left at the fatal camp, and the return to it of the pack horse, along with the large and savage dog, so justly named Terror, has also been seen.

That Don started upon the trail in the right way was proven by the manner in which he followed the wagon train.

Alone though he was, he was not to be turned back from his intention, and it will be well to now follow him upon his trail as a Black Nemesis, having but the aim in view to rescue Myrtle Ellis and avenge the dead, or lose his own life in the attempt to do so.

Terror seemed to understand thoroughly what was expected of him, that his white master lay buried in the Shelter Valley camp, and that his duty was to cling to Don and not go on to join the train, as he at first supposed he must do.

Having seen the men who had so cruelly come in possession of the train strive so hard to cover up their tracks and go up the bed of the stream to destroy all trace of the way of their retreat, Don waited until they were well out of sight and then slowly began to follow.

He did not hurry at all, keeping miles back in the rear, and intending to take his observations on foot when they should camp at night.

When the wagons at last left the bed of the stream and went into camp at the place where Buffalo Bill found the trail, Don sought a camping place a couple of miles away, had his supper, and, leaving Terror on guard, then set out, rifle in hand, and on foot, to reconnoitre his foes.

He went along with the confident, easy air of the perfect plainsman, who knew just what he was about, and after a walk of twenty minutes came in sight of the camp fires of Warburton's command.

Then he went with extreme caution, and at a safe distance scouted around the camp from the cliff on one side to

the base of the mountain range upon the other, the camping place being in a blind canyon and some hundred yards from the stream.

The negro saw the soldiers moving about, preparing supper, looking after the stock, and attending to the many other duties.

That the men wore the uniform of United States soldiers did not deter Don from his intended blow of vengeance.

He only saw in them the ones whom he had seen cruelly shoot down Donald Ellis, his wife, and boy, and his own parents and others dear to him.

He saw in the men before him only murderers, no matter what their outward covering might be.

He did not know what the fate of Myrtle might be, and he had vowed to avenge and meant to keep his word to the letter whatever the risk might be to himself.

The captain he could distinctly see seated by the camp fire.

But he was not the game that Don wanted first.

He would strike at the men first.

Their leader would come later.

Nearer and nearer he crept to where he could get good aim and have flight open to him after his shot.

At last he found a man upon whom he could draw a deadly bead.

They had been merciless to those he loved, he too would be merciless.

But, as he raised his rifle an exclamation broke from his lips and he quickly lowered it again.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE BLACK NEMESIS.

The negro was about two hundred yards from the camp fires of the soldiers.

The horses were staked out near him, the cattle were up in the blind canyon, the wagons were camped in a semi-circle, to serve as a barrier to the stock, and the entire front was open to full view.

Back to where he stood was an open space to the stream, and by running across it, after he should fire, Don could leap down the bank and then dart along on the road as far as he pleased, then come out and gain his own camp.

The soldiers had built four camp fires, at one of which, apart from the others, sat the chief in a camp chair.

He was alone and apparently lost in deep meditation.

At the next camp fire several men were getting supper, and further on the balance of the party were now gathered, for no sentinels had, as yet, been put on guard.

Any man at the last two fires could the negro pick off, if he wished, and he was making up his mind to do this when one of the men left the group and walked over to where his chief sat.

It was the one wearing the stripes of a first sergeant upon his sleeve, and whom Captain Warburton had addressed as Camp.

He was the one who had taken the bold stand against his captain, and had been the means of saving Myrtle's life, the fair young prisoner of the party, the last of the band of campers in Shelter Valley, so fatal also to them.

"I'll take him," muttered the negro, for he did not know that Camp was the one who had demanded mercy for Myrtle.

So Don got into position and was raising his rifle, when suddenly, as has been said, he uttered an exclamation, and quickly lowered it.

The cause was evident. A third person suddenly appeared in the light of the chief's fire.

It was Myrtle!

She had come from the direction of one of the ambulances, the one that had been her mother's and her special quarters, and as she approached the fire Captain Warburton hastily arose and placed a camp chair for her, while Camp doffed his hat.

The girl took the seat offered, and seemed lost in thought.

The negro lowered his rifle, took the field glass he always carried from the case at his belt, and turned it upon the girl.

"It is Missy Myrtle!" he said with quickening voice.

"Thank God, she is not dead!"

"No, no; perhaps it would be better if she was dead," and he gazed at her with feelings that caused his massive chest to heave convulsively.

"Does she know, poor child, that they killed her father, mother, and brother?"

"Does she know that they killed all of my people, too?"

"No, no, they have deceived her in some way, or she'd never sit there so calmly at the camp fire with the murderers of those she loved.

"I wonder how they did it?"

"I wonder what they told her?"

"She knows I was not in camp, and what can she think?"

"There she sits, looking into the fire as though she hoped to see loved faces there.

"But she will not.

"All are gone.

"No, I am here, and I'll let her know that she is not deserted, poor child.

"I'll tell her in my own way that Black Don is on the track of the murderers of her people.

"I will tell her that she is not deserted.

"And I will begin my story to-night!"

The last words were uttered with almost savage earnestness by the negro.

Once more he raised his field glass and gazed long and earnestly upon the young girl as she sat there by the camp fire, while Captain Warburton and Sergeant Camp talked together.

If she heard she seemed little interested in what they were saying, but sadly gazed into the fire.

The sight of Myrtle in the hands of those who had killed her people caused the negro to grit his teeth with his effort to be calm.

He was almost tempted to throw his life away, to rush in upon the campers, and kill whom he might.

The sight of her brought back all of the horrors of what he had seen, and all of his terrible sorrow, his irreparable loss.

But as he looked he grew more calm, and soon settled down into his usual cool manner, while he said:

"I must not be rash, must not be a fool.

"She is to be saved, and they are to be avenged.

"But now to tell her I am here."

With this he raised his rifle slowly and took deliberate aim at Sergeant Camp.

Another second and the flash and report followed, while the bullet sped on its way to the human target.

CHAPTER XLIII.

DON'S FIRST BLOW.

Sergeant Camp was speaking when the flash came from the bushes two hundred yards away, and at the thud of the leaden messenger he threw up his arms and fell his length upon the ground.

This Don saw, and he also saw the captain spring to his feet, as did Myrtle at the same time, the latter clasping her hands and shrieking away in wild alarm.

"Poor child, I frightened her.

"But she will soon understand," muttered Don, as he still kept his stand.

His eyes were upon the camp, and he meant to see the result of his shot.

He could have fired again.

But he did not, would not, then.

He would go about his revenge in his own way.

He heard the loud alarm of Captain Warburton, saw him grasp Myrtle's arm, and hasten her away from the light of the fire toward the wagons.

He heard loud orders given.

He saw that the soldiers, cooks, and all, quickly leaped out of the arc of light about the camp fires.

Then he knew that he must look to his own safety, for in the darkness skirmishers and scouts would be quickly sent out to hunt down the one who had fired upon the camp.

The negro had no time to lose, for a volley might be sent toward him at any moment, and a random shot might hit him.

Quickly he sped toward the stream and leaped down behind the bank.

Hardly had he done so when a dozen rifles flashed, and the bullets rattled among the trees and over his head.

Then the shots began to patter in lively style.

The soldiers were advancing in skirmish line, firing as they came to put to flight or kill their hidden foe.

Running along under shelter of the bank for a quarter of a mile Don then made for a position where he could see what was done.

He saw the soldiers advance to the stream, he beheld their position by the flashing of their carbines, and he heard the shots that were fired to frighten the unseen foe.

"They are making a heap of fuss and wasting powder for nothing.

"I'm all right," he muttered.

Soon the firing ceased, but the negro knew that during the advance sentinels had been dropped here and there to keep in hiding and protect the camp from another secret shot.

"I guess I'll go now.

"But to-morrow night they'll find they have not scared me off.

"And Missy Myrtle will know I am still on her trail."

Back to his camp he went and found Terror on watch, as a low growl told him as he approached.

"Good old dog, I've hit them the first blow, and there will be more.

"Now, we'll turn in, for we won't be bothered here."

The camp was soon silent, though Don did not go to sleep for a long time.

The sight of Myrtle and his first blow to avenge had greatly disturbed him, and the whole dread past flitted before him in the darkness of his lone camp.

He slept late, for there was no need for him to hurry, and he got his breakfast and shared it with Terror.

His splendid black horse and the pack animal had fared well during the night, for the grass was plentiful, and they were well rested.

At last Don started once more on the trail.

As he drew near the camp he dismounted and went along on foot to have a view of the camp.

The place was deserted, save for coyotes, and these told him that no human being was lurking there.

Returning to his horses he again mounted and soon reached the place.

The coyotes scattered at his coming, and riding up to the fire where he had seen Myrtle, the captain, and sergeant, he looked about him.

"I do not see any blood.

"But then the coyotes would have lapped that up; but where is the grave of the man I killed?"

Riding all over the camp he failed to find any grave.

Then he extended his search, but with the same result.

"Did I not kill him after all?"

"Could I have missed him?"

"No, no, I could not do that.

"I saw him fall; but he may have been only wounded.

"I'll push on now, and when they camp to-night it will tell the story.

"But there must be no misses, that is certain.

"They are going toward the Indian country; but that don't scare me a little bit, for where they go I can follow," and mounting once more the Black Nemesis continued on the trail to be on hand at the next camp.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE CAPTIVE.

When the first shots were fired upon the people of the Donald Ellis wagon train in the camp in Shelter Valley, Myrtle had been in the tent devoted to her mother and herself in the long overland trail they had come.

The firing had alarmed her, the shrieks of the negroes added to the terror, and rushing out of the tent her eyes had fallen upon the dead body of her mother and brother.

More she had not seen, not even who their foes were, and with a moan she had sunk down in an almost deathlike swoon.

When she at last came to consciousness she found herself in her tent lying upon the little cot.

It was night, but a light burned in the tent, and seated by her she beheld a man in the uniform of a sergeant of cavalry.

He was chafing her hands and had been bathing her head to restore her to consciousness.

She started at the sight and cried excitedly:

"Oh, what has happened?"

"Calm yourself, miss, for you are among friends."

"No harm shall befall you now," said the sergeant in a tone meant to be most kind.

"Where are my parents, and—oh! tell me that it was a terrible dream, that they are not dead!"

"My poor child, I wish I could tell you what you ask, but alas! I cannot."

"They are dead!" she cried.

"Can you listen now to the story I have to tell you?"

"Yes, yes."

"Tell me the worst, for I know, I feel that all are dead, for our camp was attacked by—"

"I'll tell you all."

"Your camp was attacked by a band of outlaws, and they rushed in upon it, killing all of your people."

"But the soldiers we saw coming?" cried Myrtle, and closing her eyes she lay moaning bitterly as she heard the story of death that was told her.

"Yes, it was our coming that saved your life, even."

"You had fainted, so were thought dead, or you, too, would have been shot down."

"But ere the outlaws could commit still greater crime, we dashed up, for they did not see us, and saved you, and the camp from being looted."

"Would to Heaven I had been shot too," moaned the girl.

"No, no, don't say that, for you are young, and life is before you, miss."

"This terrible grief will soon be soothed by time and new friends, new associations will comfort and cheer you, while in our captain and his men you have warm friends."

"You are very kind, I know; but were all killed, the negroes and all?"

"It was a complete wipe-out, or massacre, save yourself, poor child."

"Oh, if I, too, had only gone with the others!"

"No, no, for Heaven knows best, and later you will feel so."

"I cannot, I can think, feel only that I am utterly alone, that all I loved are gone."

"Let me urge you to take this medicine now, and to-morrow you will feel better and will know all."

"The train is yours, and we are here to protect you and your belongings, miss."

"But now you must sleep, and this medicine will do you good."

"And remember that good friends are about you, if we are but rough soldiers."

"Take this now."

He held a cup to her lips, and eagerly she drank its contents.

She seemed to grasp at anything to deaden the keen anguish she felt.

Sitting by her until he saw that she had sunk into a deep sleep, the sergeant then rose, closed the flap of the tent,

extinguishing the light, and walked over to a campfire where the leader of the uniformed band was pacing to and fro, his hands clasped behind his back.

"She has recovered from her swoon, captain."

"And is mad, I suppose, crazed with what she beheld?"

"No, she took it with strange calmness."

"She does not realize the truth."

"Yes, sir, I think so."

"She was in the tent when the attack was made, but had seen us coming, and when I told her a band of outlaws, not observing our presence near, had attacked the camp, she considers all was just as I have said."

"That is the way she believes it, then?" quickly asked the captain.

"It is, sir."

"Did she ask no questions you could not answer?"

"None, sir."

"It is fortunate, then, as it is."

"I told her that all her people were gone, that we had saved her life and the train for her, and that you and your men were her devoted friends."

"Good!"

"What then?"

"I gave her a generous dose of morphine, and she is now asleep, and I will keep her so for quite awhile."

"I leave her to your care, Camp, for you were, I know, a physician before you became a soldier; but the sentinel at the lower end of the camp is calling, and I will go there."

It was the arrival of Buffalo Bill, whom the sentinel had challenged, and which the reader has already been made acquainted with.

CHAPTER XLV.

A BITTER ORDEAL.

When Myrtle returned to consciousness, or, that is, awakened from her deep sleep under the influence of the morphine, she found herself in a strange camp.

She was not in her little tent, but in the ambulance, and there had been a great effort made to have her comfortable.

Her head was aching, and she felt weak and wretched.

The sun was shining, and she saw soldiers moving about the camp.

It was the camp reached after leaving Shelter Valley, and she had slept through the visit of Buffalo Bill, and later through the hurried departure that followed his going.

She had been put in the ambulance, and continued to sleep during the retreat from the valley, the drive up the bed of the stream, and only after the arrival in camp the next morning did she wake up.

It was a long time before she could collect her scattered senses.

But at last all the horror of what she had gone through with came slowly before her.

She lay there awake, and in bitter, painful thought.

She did not give way to her cruel grief in a burst of tears, for she felt too deeply for that.

She was strangely calm, and her face was deathly white.

She only knew that she must be in the care of those who were good to her.

At last she rose and looked out of the ambulance.

She saw soldiers moving about, and cooks busy at a fire cooking dinner.

She sprang out of the ambulance and met Captain Warburton face to face.

He bowed with marked courtesy, and said:

"I was just going to see if you still slept, miss."

"I am Captain Warburton, and we are retreating from foes, carrying you and your wagon train along."

"The acting surgeon of my command looked to your comfort, as well as he could, and told you the sad result of the attack on your camp."

"But you have the deepest sympathy of myself and my men, and we are your

friends, so command us in all that we can do for you."

He spoke in a strangely sympathetic voice, and pressed the little hand extended to him in silence, for at first she could not speak.

But at last she faltered:

"Were all slain?"

"Alas! all."

"And I am all alone?"

"We are your friends, miss."

"Where are they?"

He divined who she meant, and replied:

"I had them all buried, my dear child."

"But we were forced to leave in great haste, for I have but a small force, and both outlaw bands and hostile Indians infest this country, and I am now retreating to a safe place, before we start on our return to the fort."

"Your tent and its contents I had placed to itself in yonder pines, where you will be safe and alone, and I will escort you there, and have your ambulance drawn up there also, should there be anything in it you need."

"Let me suggest that you drink a cup of coffee I will send you, and eat some dinner, while you must make an effort to rally out of your grief."

"You are a brave girl, and we will need your aid, so forget your sorrows in helping us."

"Now I'll take you to your tent, and let me tell you that we will remain in camp here until to-morrow."

She had listened to all he said, but in a way that showed she did not realize anything as it was, in the change that had come upon her.

She went with him to the secluded spot where her tent had been pitched, and there he left her.

But soon several soldiers drew her ambulance up near the tent, and they bowed to her with deepest reverence, their heads uncovered.

Then the captain returned, accompanied by a soldier bearing some coffee and her dinner.

The soldier got her a bucket of fresh water, and her dinner was spread out on a little table taken from the ambulance, the captain doing this for her.

"You are all so kind," she said, and she was left alone.

She dashed her face into the cool water, combed her wealth of hair and braided it, and then ate her dinner, and with a relish she had not believed herself capable of.

Later she took a stroll, accompanied by the train dogs, that now kept close to her and seemed to be a great comfort to her.

During the afternoon she packed her mother's, father's, and brother's things away in the ambulance, and then laid down to sleep.

When she awoke it was dark, and she arose and walked toward the campfire, where she saw Captain Warburton.

She took the chair offered her, and merely said:

"I came to join you at supper, sir."

Then she sat gazing into the fire until there came the sudden ring of a rifle, and Sergeant Camp dropped before her eyes.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A SECRET FOE.

The shot that dropped Sergeant Camp so suddenly was a shock that came without a single thought in the minds of the men in the camp that such a thing was possible.

There was certainly no pursuit to fear from Indians, they believed, and they had seen Buffalo Bill start for the fort.

Could he have met a command and come on in chase of them?

But why would soldiers thus attack them?

Thoughts flew rapidly through brains, and the result was a scattering of the men to dark covers, away from the fire.

Captain Warburton had seized Myrtle by the hand and almost dragged her to cover.

The girl had hardly started at the shot.

Her sensibilities were too deadened by what she had passed through for alarm or quick action.

"Some devil has fired upon our camp and killed the sergeant."

"You must remain in cover here," said the captain.

Then he called to his men to advance as skirmishers with their carbines, pelting the way ahead with bullets as they went.

The men had rallied quickly.

The stacked arms had been seized, and the reader knows how when they fell back guards were secretly left on the watch, in good retreats.

Captain Warburton had advanced with his men, repeating rifle in hand.

Myrtle had remained for a moment where she had been left.

Then she saw a movement of the prostrate form of Sergeant Camp.

At once she advanced toward him.

With a nerve to be admired she knelt by the man and tore open his shirt, while she said, as she saw his eyes fixed upon her:

"You were wounded in the side; but it may not be fatal."

"I do not believe it is, miss."

"The blow was a severe one, knocking the breath out of my body, but I believe the bullet glanced on a rib."

"Get up, if you can, and I will fix you a bed out of the firelight, and the captain will examine your wound."

"I don't want you to suffer, for you were good to me."

The man looked at her with a strange expression upon his dark, bearded face.

But he did not speak, only placed his hand upon the wound, examined it, and said:

"I believe I am all right."

Then he arose, and yet he staggered and remarked:

"It may be worse than I think, miss, but I hope not."

Myrtle took the blanket roll he pointed to and spread him a bed very quickly.

Then she led him to it and aided him to lie down.

Next she gave him a tin cup of water, and then put a soft, folded towel over his wound, which was just over his heart.

The bullet had cut a deep gash, but had glanced on a rib and passed on.

But the rib was broken, that was certain, by the blow.

When the captain came back, having placed his sentinels far out, he was much pleased to find the sergeant not dead.

"You are a brave little nurse, miss, and—"

"My name is Myrtle, Captain Warburton," she said, simply.

"Ah! a sweet name, indeed."

"It shall be Myrtle; the Mascot, then."

"But, Camp, who can have been our foe, for I believe there was one only?"

"Buffalo Bill," was the low reply.

"Buffalo Bill?"

"Why, man, he left us—"

Camp was about to speak, and say that he had doubts of Buffalo Bill believing what he had been told, and he might have followed them to convince himself if his suspicions were correct, when Myrtle said, quickly:

"You surely do not mean Buffalo Bill, the great scout, for why would he fire upon soldiers?"

The captain and the sergeant saw their mistake, and the former said quickly:

"There are two Buffalo Bills, Miss Myrtle: one the great army scout, of whom you have heard, the other one we have cause to fear."

"Do you know this Buffalo Bill, the scout?"

"No, sir, but my father knew him when he was out here gold hunting a year ago with Don."

"And your father had been here before?"

"Yes, sir, he came out to look for gold, he and Don."

"Who is Don?"

"Father's right hand man, a negro whose family belonged to us in slavery days."

"Don was our friend, as well as serv-

ant, and mother felt no fear when he was with father."

"Why, when we were on the New Mexico trail, on our way here, Don discovered that we were to be attacked by El Diablo, the Mexican outlaw, and his men, and he killed the chief himself and several of his men."

"And where is this Don now?"

She did not answer for some time.

Then she said, in a low tone:

"Dead."

"Yes, he is dead."

"All of my people, white and black, were killed last night."

"Have you forgotten, for I never can?"

CHAPTER XLVII.

STILL SHADOWED.

Anxious to take the thoughts of the young girl off of her loss, Captain Warburton, at her reply, said quickly:

"So your father was a gold hunter, was he?"

"Yes, sir."

"He lost a fortune through a relative, and he came out to the far West with Don to look for gold."

"Did he find it?"

"Yes, sir, after nearly two years he did."

"And he was taking his family there?"

"Yes, sir, we were going to his gold find."

"Now it belongs to you."

"I suppose so, for I am the last one now."

"But how will you find it?"

"I have father's map of the trail to it."

"You are fortunate."

"I would rather now even one of the little pickaninnies back again than all the gold that may be there."

Again the captain saw that he was treading on dangerous ground, so said:

"Never mind, all will come right for our sweet little Mascot, for she will soon have friends to love her and make her life a bright one."

"But now, Miss Myrtle—"

"Don't call me Miss."

"All right, Myrtle."

"I want you now to help me to care for the sergeant's wound, and we'll soon have him all right again, though the shot was well intended."

The wound was an ugly looking one, and it was found that the bullet had struck a pocket knife in the pocket of the sergeant's hunting shirt, and with such force that the rib beneath had been broken.

But the ball had glanced down, cut into the flesh, and torn its way out through the clothing, a close call, indeed, for the sergeant, as Captain Warburton had said.

With a broken rib, the sergeant would have to keep very quiet and ride in the ambulance, but, as he facetiously remarked:

"Not so quiet as he would have kept had the bullet not glanced on the pocket knife."

Supper was soon after served, and the captain and Myrtle ate at the same table, a table that had belonged to the train.

Soon after the girl said good-night and went off to her little tent, leaving the captain and Camp alone.

"She will soon be all right, Camp."

"She is too stunned now to feel just what she has lost."

"But you heard what she said about that map?"

"Yes, she has it."

"Yes."

"And it is doubtless a rich mine."

"But about that negro, Don?"

"What about him?"

"How many negroes were killed?"

"Four."

"Then he was doubtless one of them."

"Oh, yes, it was a complete wipe-out, save for the girl."

"Yes, the whole party were in the camp, beyond a doubt."

"There is no doubt of it."

After a short silence the captain said:

"Now to the one who fired the shot that so nearly ended your life?"

"What about him?"

"Who was he?"

"I only wish I knew, captain."

"It could not have been an Indian."

"Oh, no."

"Ah! I have it."

"Well, sir?"

"It was that wild fellow the men call the Man Grizzly."

"Why did we not think of that before, for he was surely the one."

"Then we must look out for him."

"Yes, indeed, for we will surely hear from him again."

"It will be necessary to set guards around the camp at night."

"It will, indeed, for we know what the Man Grizzly is."

For an hour longer the captain and his sergeant talked together, the two appearing to be upon strangely familiar terms, and then the fires were allowed to die down and the camp was in deep repose, save for the three sentinels on the watch for another visit from their secret foe.

The next morning early the train pulled out for the trail.

The sergeant rode in the ambulance, and Myrtle drove, as she had asked to do so.

The stream here led through a canyon-like valley between two mountains, and the trail was a fairly good one.

But there was now no effort made to cover up the trail as before.

Sticking to the bed of the stream, as they had, for miles and miles, and destroying their trail with the tracks of the buffalo herd, they felt assured that they had concealed most thoroughly the way of their flight, save from one.

That one they supposed to be the strange man they knew as the "Man Grizzly."

For him they must keep a bright lookout in their night camps.

At noon a halt was made by a large spring that flowed into a rock basin at the base of a cliff overhanging a valley.

But hardly had they gathered around the campfires to eat their dinner when there came the crack of a rifle, and one of the soldiers dropped dead in the midst of his comrades.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE THIRD SHOT.

There was consternation in the camp when this unexpected shot came into their midst and a soldier fell dead.

The sun was shining brightly, and that death was lurking in its light no one had believed.

But it had come, and a second time the unseen foe had made the camp feel his fatal presence.

Myrtle was eating her dinner with Captain Warburton, while Sergeant Camp, with his body bandaged tightly, was lying on a blanket near the men.

The man who was killed had fallen almost in the fire, and in scattering to shelter the men had left him lying there.

The bullet has pierced his head, and he had never known what hit him.

The men scampered to the wagons.

The captain had sprung to the shelter of the ambulance.

Myrtle had not moved from the camp table, where she had just finished her dinner.

"Run, Myrtle, run!"

"Come where I am," cried the captain, while Sergeant Camp, moving with remarkable activity, had crawled under a wagon, and now shouted:

"Yes, run, miss, run!"

"I will not move," she replied, firmly.

"You will be killed."

"No man will kill a girl, be he ever so wicked, Captain Warburton."

"But this is a human hyena, a mad man, one whom we call the Man Grizzly, and he knows no mercy."

"He will not kill me," and the girl looked calmly up toward the cliff from whence the fatal shot had come.

"You do not know him as we do, for he is a butcher, and will surely kill you!"

"If he does, I will be at rest, for are not all I love dead?"

As she spoke she saw that the clothing of the dead man was beginning to catch on fire.

Quickly she arose from the table and ran to the fire.

Then she dragged the body away from it and put out the flames.

Captain Warburton had followed her. He must not flinch in the presence of his men.

He went close under the cliff, however, and glanced upward.

It was a wall of rock, but could be scaled.

It was some hundred feet in height. Going back for his repeating rifle, he called two of the men to follow him, and at once began the climb.

The men followed, but they did not appear to relish the task.

Reaching the top, the captain and his men made a spring for it, and disappeared from sight.

For half an hour they were gone, and then the chief appeared, and the men soon after, and all began to descend to the camp.

"We saw not a trace of him."

"Neither was there a trail, Camp."

"It seems that we must keep a guard by day, as well as by night, captain."

"It does."

"It is the only way to protect the camp."

"I have now but twenty men left, and two of those are wounded, three, in fact, including you, Camp."

"Captain."

"Well?"

"Take the body along."

"Why?"

"Well, he did not kill me, and if he finds no grave here, he will believe he has failed a second time, and perhaps give it up!"

"A good idea, Camp."

"I will act upon it."

"You can drop the body in some stream we pass, or even into some canyon."

"I will."

"Who is this Man Grizzly, Captain Warburton, that seems so deadly a foe upon your path?" asked Myrtle, joining the two men.

"I do not know."

"We only know that he dresses in the skin of a grizzly bear, and has the head also on it, to draw on over his own head as a hood, though he generally has been seen wearing an Indian war bonnet of feathers."

"He rides a fleet horse, and is a dead shot, for the man who lies yonder is the fifth one that he has killed of my men."

"Does he kill for no reason?"

"He may have an imaginary wrong, Myrtle."

"I really believe he is some poor madman, for such are common in this wild Western land."

Myrtle made no reply, but, as the ambulance team was ready, she took her seat and drove off once more on the trail. Captain Warburton riding ahead.

They went into camp early, and a spot was sought in a valley where it was comparatively open.

It was on the banks of a mountain stream, and with a guard across it, and out in the valley surrounding, they considered that even the Man Grizzly dare not approach near enough to fire a fatal shot into their midst.

But they were mistaken.

Just as supper was over another shot came, and another of the men got a bullet in his brain as he stood near the campfire.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A WEIRD JOKE.

The camp was wild with excitement as this third shot of their secret foe came into their midst and claimed another victim.

All but one ran from the light of the campfire into the shadows.

The one that did not run was Myrtle.

Captain Warburton tried to force her with him, but she would not move, and commanded him to leave her alone.

He did so.

He did not care to be the fourth victim of the secret foe.

The sentinels were even more surprised at the shot than were the men in the camp.

Three sentinels were two hundred yards out from the edge of the camp, lying upon their blankets spread upon the ground, and in a semi-circle from the bank of the stream upon which was the encampment.

A fourth sentinel had been ferried across the stream on the back of a horse, a comrade going to bring the animal back again.

The stream was all of four feet deep there.

This fourth sentinel lay on his blanket two hundred yards away from the river bank, and a desire to take care of himself would keep him awake.

Those who stood guard at night could sleep in the wagon on the march by day.

But the shot had come from the stream.

It had been fired within a hundred feet of the campfires.

The flash had been seen by but few, but those few had placed the position of the dead shot.

He had peered over the low bank from the stream.

The first thought had been to run for the darkness beyond the arc of light cast by the fires.

This accomplished, the men grasped their carbines and waited for their chief to give an order.

It soon came in trumpet tones:

"Guards, close in rapidly to the banks of the stream, above and below."

"Men in camp, divide your forces and go up and down the bank in a double-quick."

"I will mount and follow you."

The captain ran for his horse and leaped upon his back without saddle or bridle, calling to the guard there over the animals to do the same and go up the bank, while he dashed down it.

The men were not two minutes obeying orders, and they met the sentinels below and above; went up and down the banks, searched every break, and the waters, but nowhere was their foe visible.

In some way he had slipped into their lines, and just as mysteriously he had slipped out again.

Over an hour was passed in the search, and then the men, save the sentinels, returned to the camp.

Myrtle was seated near Camp, talking to him.

She was questioning him about their deadly shadower upon their trail, for she was becoming more and more interested in the strange Nemesis that was dogging to death the little command.

The night passed without another alarm, and the first thing the light revealed startled the camp.

There, peering over the bank, as though standing in the stream, was a human face, and his arms, extended out upon the ground, appeared to be grasping a rifle, aimed full at the group of men gathered for breakfast about the campfire.

In the gray light the men saw only a foe aiming at them.

Wildly they bounded for cover, while Myrtle quietly walked toward the man.

"It is the dead man you put in the river, when we camped last night, to go down with the stream," she called out.

A laugh followed her words, and the men came out of hiding.

"This is not a rifle, but a black stick."

"The man is propped up here, as though he were aiming at you," she continued, and added:

"Don't be afraid of a dead man, soldiers."

Another laugh followed, and the men ran to the spot, where Captain Warburton had joined Myrtle.

It was a ghastly sight, for the man was propped up with sticks, his head and shoulders being above the bank, and his arms outstretched, grasping the long black stick that served as a rifle.

It was really the body of their comrade, killed in the last camp, and brought along to keep the slayer from knowing what deadly work he had done.

The body had evidently been found by the secret foe, and the weird joke played to show the men how near he had been to camp, in spite of the guards.

"This is becoming unbearable, Camp," said the captain, as he walked back to where the sergeant was lying near the fire.

"It is, sir."

"But what will the next camp prove for us?"

"Heaven only knows."

"It is a judgment, think you?"

"Curse your superstitions, man."

"I accept all judgments that come to my life."

"A cruel fate guides me, and I follow blindly and take the consequences, good or bad," said Captain Warburton, in reckless mood.

"Do you take this second body along also?"

"Yes."

"We will be a traveling funeral procession before long," was the bitter reply, and soon after breakfast the train pulled out once more on its perilous trail.

CHAPTER L.

NUMBER FIVE.

It was necessarily slow traveling, with the stock in the wagon train, for only at times were the sheep and hogs brought along by the unfortunate gold hunter, Donald Ellis, allowed to ride in the wagons.

They were made to walk when it was possible, and the soldiers would not desert them.

"Your father came well prepared into this country, to found a perfect home, with his coops of geese, ducks, and chickens, his cattle, sheep, and hogs, not to speak of his horses and mules."

"We expected to be here for several years, father said."

"Well, we will leave nothing behind, Myrtle."

"Save my dead."

"Alas! yes."

"But we will take the outfit, though we must travel by slow marches each day."

"Is there any hurry?"

"Well, no."

"Then I do not care when I reach the fort, only—"

"Only what, my child?"

"If it takes three weeks, at one man a day, I will be the only one to reach the fort with the outfit."

"You are right, if that deadly devil continues to pick us off."

"But I'll see to it that he kills no more of my men."

"How will you?"

"I'll find a way."

"Are you going to carry the two dead bodies now?"

"Yes."

"My old negro mammy used to say it was bad luck to travel with a corpse."

"Sh—!"

"Don't let the men hear you say so."

"Wait until to-night, and see if it is," said the girl, in her brusque way, and Captain Warburton, in spite of his nerve, shuddered.

The train made over fifteen miles before camping for noon, and it was nearly a mile to the nearest spot, apparently, where a foe could find a place of concealment from which a shot could be fired.

On this account no sentinels were put out, as no necessity was seen for it.

Dinner was prepared, eaten, and the men were hitching up for a start, when a puff of white smoke burst out from the very plain, it seemed, quite half a mile distant.

The sound of the report and the bullet

came together, and the latter struck with a dull thud the body of a man.

He gave a cry, rose, looked about him, and with a low moan sank, to rise not again.

"Mount and follow me!

"We will catch that devil this time!" shouted the captain.

A dozen men were in their saddles in an instant, and among them went Myrtle, for she had expressed a desire to ride horseback on the next march, and her horse had been saddled for her.

It looked as though the man had ventured to crawl upon the plain near enough to the camp to fire, and now would have no chance of escape, as he would have to run for it, with no shelter near.

But he did not spring up to run for it.

Was he going to stand his ground and fight it out?

Myrtle was well ahead, with Captain Warburton, and they first discovered the secret.

The plain was seamed there by a small gully, only to be seen when close upon it.

The Secret Foe had crept up this until he reached the shallow end, picked out his man, and fired.

Then he had run back down the gully, which deepened and widened toward the end, and, mounting his horse, was well away before the soldiers reached the spot from whence he had fired.

"Follow me!" shouted Captain Warburton, and on they went, Myrtle still in the lead with the officer.

The end of the gully was reached, and there there was an abrupt bank, twenty feet in height.

The horses could not get down, heavy timber was beyond, and the chase must be given up without even a sight of the foe.

"We will yet catch him, men.

"Until we do, we must keep the brightest watch possible and take our chances of being the next on the list."

Back to camp they went, and the train pulled out.

Another fifteen miles was made, the trail running along a ridge, and halting just where the descent was made.

The cattle were driven down to water in the valley, and back again, and a sentinel was placed at either side on the narrow ridge.

These were regarded as all that were considered necessary in that well-protected camp.

But they were not.

Again a shot was heard, and this time it was one of the sentinels that fell.

The Secret Foe had struck down Sergeant Camp wounded, and four men killed.

Then a gloom as dark as the shadows of Death fell upon the men of the retreating train, and Myrtle said:

"My old negro mammy said it was bad luck to travel with a corpse."

CHAPTER LI.

THE SECRET FOE.

Don, the Black Avenger, left his camp after his night's rest with the firm determination to stick to the trail of the wagon train.

What he had seen in the camp of the men, the presence there of Myrtle, but made him the more determined to carry out his vow, made over the graves of his parents and his people.

His first duty having been done, the camp visited, and no dead body found there, he did not despair that his aim had not left a grave to mark the camping place.

He followed on, and, looking far ahead from a rise of ground, he felt that the train would halt at noon somewhere near a cliff overhanging a canyon, and which he could see distinctly.

"There is water there, from the fringe of willows I see, and there they will camp," he said to himself.

With this idea in view, he pulled off from the train trail to make a flank movement.

The pack horse and Terror kept well

up without urging, and at last the ridge was reached some couple of miles from the cliff that looked down upon the plain.

If he had made a mistake, he could readily discover the fact, and again overhaul the train by night.

Staking his horses out on the ridge, and leaving the dog to guard them, rifle in hand he skulked along the ridge, keeping under cover of the timber that was there.

At length he gained the shelter of some bushes and lay down.

He had been right in his conjecture.

The train was coming to camp at the cliff.

Soon the train was there, and the negro crawled to the edge of the cliff, a broken bush in his hand.

He peered over, fastening the bush among the rocks.

There was the camp, not two hundred feet from him.

He saw Myrtle, and he saw each man of the command.

Carefully he studied their faces, as he could, using his field glass at times.

His black face softened and saddened as he looked at Myrtle, and then, as he turned his gaze upon the men, it would become hard and stern.

At length, having seen all that he cared for at that time, he reached back for his rifle.

"They are treating her well; but it is not from any feeling of sympathy and kindness for her.

"She looks sad and older, but she bears up well.

"Surely they have deceived her, for they appear to her as friends.

"There is the man I wounded in the other camp, and did not kill.

"My bullet must have struck something in his pocket.

"He is the sergeant of the command.

"I will not fire upon a wounded man, so will take another.

"I'll take that big, ugly-faced fellow there."

The rifle was leveled and the trigger was touched.

The report followed and the man fell.

Waiting barely long enough to see that the aim had been deadly, the negro drew back from the bush that sheltered him, and ran like a deer along the ridge.

He had seen that the cliff could be scaled, and he did not care to be seen.

So long as Myrtle believed that he was the shadower he did not care.

In his own good time they should see him, he had decided.

Back to his horses he sped, and was soon mounted and away.

He went on ahead now, for he looked over the plain and picked out the trail the train must follow.

A wide detour he had to make, not to be seen, but this he did, and at last camped in the hills beyond the plain.

It was not yet sunset, and he spied the train, and watched it go into camp on the stream.

Then he began to walk down the stream bank, leaving Terror, as before, to guard the camp.

It was growing dark, and he felt sure that sentinels would then be sent out, and from the situation of the camp he knew just about how they would be placed.

When night came he picked up a piece of driftwood, added others to it, and made a raft that would readily bear his rifle, belt of arms, and clothing.

This he floated down the stream with its load, and soon drew near the camp.

A stone and the end of his lariat not used in tying the raft made an anchor, and then, leaving it there, rifle in hand he waded down the stream until he got near the camp.

He saw the horse cross with the two men, one of them being the sentinel for the other side.

Back went the equine ferry and rider, and then the negro waded on down the stream below the camp, to get a better look at the men from a safer position.

Suddenly, as he reached the shore, he stumbled over a dead body.

CHAPTER LII.

SHADOWED TO DOOM.

The negro halted very suddenly when he felt the dead body with his foot.

He had seen it on the edge of the water, and supposed it to be a log.

Discovering just what it was, he was tempted to leap away from his ghastly find.

But he was devoid of much of the superstition of his race, while he was wholly devoid of fear.

Leaning over the body, he drew it out of the water and felt the face.

It was a white man, bearded, and a wound had killed him.

It did not take Don long to reason out just who he was.

"They brought the body along to fool me, and threw it in the stream here to get rid of it and not have me see it.

"I'll fool them, and they'll see it again.

"They did not throw it far enough out in the stream, and so it drifted along the shore to this place.

"All right, I'll fix it to give them a scare."

There were rocks here and there in the stream, and, going up the stream, towing the body after him, the negro sought the largest one of them.

Here he fastened the body, and it sank beneath the surface of the water.

Climbing upon the rock, he looked across at the camp.

For some time he stood there, and then stooping, he picked up his rifle off the rock, raised it slowly, and, taking deliberate aim, pulled trigger.

Instantly he dropped down and slid into the water, crouching there by the rock, and holding his rifle where it would not get wet.

He knew that his shot had done its work, and there waited, taking the chances, while the men searched for him.

But it was not supposed that he had remained, after his shot, and no one rode out to the rocks to discover if the foe was hiding there.

Until the search ended Don held his position, and then, holding his rifle in one hand, and drawing the body along with the other, he went ashore right opposite to the camp.

With some sticks of driftwood he found upon the shore he arranged the body of the dead man as has been seen, and gave the camp a fright when it was discovered in the morning.

The negro then retraced his way up the stream to where he had anchored his little raft, went ashore, and dressed himself, and struck off for his camp in a run to warm himself up after being so long in the cool water.

The night passed without disturbance, Terror sleeping with one eye open while his master slept, and Don was in no hurry to turn out early in the morning, knowing that the train could not escape him.

After a good breakfast he set out, and after a ride of a few miles sighted the train.

He had determined to strike a blow in each camp, and he noted the way the trail led.

"They'll camp on the plain to-day, and it will be hard to get a shot at them," he said, as he saw the stretch of open country ahead.

But luck favored the determined avenger, for he saw where the train halted, and at the same time discovered a ravine running far into the plain.

Leaving his horses and dog in some timber, he ascended the ravine until it became too shallow to go further without being seen.

Passing across the plain at half a mile distant, he saw the camp.

No one was on guard.

It was not thought that they were needed there.

The trail ran some distance from the ravine, and it was not therefore visible, it appearing as though the plain was unbroken.

The repeating rifle was a good one, and Don knew that it was deadly at that dis-

tance, and further, if he hit his human target.

The sights were raised, when he had calculated the distance, his man was picked out, and the result of the long-range shot the reader already knows.

Like a deer he ran down the ravine, gaining the timber where his horses were, and sat there watching the foiled horsemen as they found that they could not descend into the lower plain.

"Now for to-night's camp," he grimly muttered, as he set out to flank the train and get ahead, for he had observed the nature of the country further on, and he knew that hiding places were frequent.

Gaining a ridge well in advance, at the base of which there was a small stream, he said to himself:

"They'll camp on that stream, I guess, and put sentinels up here and out upon the plain.

"Never mind, another man is doomed to die here, watch and camp where they may."

With this he rode back along the ridge and sought a camp.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE CAPTAIN'S PLAN.

The shot of the Black Nemesis on the ridge once more alarmed the camp of soldiers.

With a guard at the base of the hill where the trail descended, and another off along the ridge, Captain Warburton had felt secure.

The only way for the "Man Grizzly," as they still believed their Secret Foe to be, to get near enough to fire upon the camp would be to face one of these hiding sentinels.

The men therefore hoped to hear a shot, and feel that it was the sentinel that had fired this time.

They did hear the shot, they ran along the ridge with hope, but not hearing the triumphant shout of the sentinel, they reached him with despair.

There he lay dead.

The men were becoming demoralized. Could this thing go on?

Must a man die at every camp?

Could they not manage to kill their dread foe?

Captain Warburton saw that something must be done.

Life was dear to the men, and he knew that they would desert the train, rather than take further chances of sure death.

The captain had the dead sentinel brought in and placed with the other dead, saying to the sergeant:

"We will bury them all here in the morning, Camp."

"Yes, captain, but you will have to decide upon some plan to kill our foe, for I tell you frankly the men expect it to-night, or they will leave."

"I fear that, and I'll tell you what I have decided upon."

"Yes, sir."

"We will bury the dead here.

"You are skillful with your knife, so carve on a cedar board I saw in one of the wagons, an inscription for the dead."

"Yes, sir."

"Their names and what else?"

"Carve as follows:

"A Fatal Trail.

"Killed

"by

"A Secret Foe,

"While camping from Shelter Valley to

"this spot,

"Four men of B Troop,

"—th U. S. Cavalry."

"I will do it, sir."

"Now, I'll send for the board for you, and then tell you my plan."

One of the men was sent for the cedar board, and it was found to be just what the sergeant wanted for the work he had to do.

He was a most skillful wood carver, and set to work at once, while the captain talked, Myrtle having gone to her tent for the night.

"By to-morrow noon," said Captain Warburton, "we will reach the Red Range, and you know that the heavy

wagons can go no further, though the ambulances can.

"There are plenty of pack saddles along, and we can take all that the wagons contain with us."

"Yes, sir."

"There are several places where wheels cannot pass, but we can get the ambulances over, and I wish to leave nothing behind save the heavy wagons.

"Where we leave the wagons will be in an open plain under a low bluff, and by placing mounted sentinels on the bluff our foe can get nowhere near us, for we can see him for miles off on the plain.

"There is water and grass there, and we will make a camp.

"But we will start off with our pack animals for our fort, and push on through the night.

"Once at our fort, we have nothing to fear."

"True, sir, but between here and the fort the Man Grizzly will surely let us hear from him."

"Now to my plan."

"Yes, captain."

"If he cannot get near us in our noon camp, before we enter the Red Range, he will wait until night to strike a blow."

"And we won't be there."

"Listen!

"I wish to leave a dozen of the men there, and, besides their horses, several others that are used up.

"These will give a show of our being there, and the Secret Foe will creep in toward night to get his deadly shot.

"Now, my idea is to have the men keep the fires going, and just at nightfall to slip out of camp and lie in wait at a distance, surrounding the camp."

"I begin to see now."

"The Secret Foe will see no one in camp, and creep nearer and nearer to get his shot, and he will pass within the line.

"The man he passes nearest to must take no chances, but let him get within the circle."

"I see, sir."

"The fires will reveal him to all, and then the men can close in upon him and catch him like a rat in a trap."

"It is the very thing to do, Captain Warburton, and this plan, made known to the men at once, will keep them from deserting the train."

"I will at once let them know," answered the captain, and the men were called to the council.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE TRAP SET.

The men heard the plan of action with manifestations of delight.

It was to be action against their secret foe.

Had the plan not been made known to them, fear would have caused some of them to desert the train during the night.

They retired to their blankets with hope of soon having their Secret Foe within their revengeful grip.

The sergeant went on with his wood carving, while the captain and he talked together about their plot to capture the "Man Grizzly," for they were sure that he was their Secret Foe.

At last the sergeant finished his task, and, with the captain, turned in for the night.

It was not dawn when the camp was aroused, breakfast was gotten, the grave was dug, and soon after the four bodies were placed in it.

The head-board was put above the dead, and then the train pulled out for the next camp, going at a brisk pace.

The next halting place was just as the captain had said, and it was noted with pleasure that with guards out the Secret Foe could not get anywhere near the camp.

The work was at once begun of stripping the wagons and packing the saddles.

Two ambulances were to be taken, one for Myrtle and her baggage, the other for the camp of cows and other things not to be carried in pack saddles.

Myrtle watched the arrangements in her calm way.

What her thoughts were she concealed and not an objection did she make.

Much of the belongings of the negroes was to be left behind, and when the men left the camp, after springing their trap upon the Secret Foe, they were to be burned, along with the wagons.

Some new clothing brought along for the negroes caught the fancy of the men, and Captain Warburton said:

"You can wear it and spare your uniforms, men."

This they did, but the captain still stuck to his fatigue uniform.

The sergeant was to remain in charge of the men that were to stay behind, the captain accompanying Myrtle and the pack animals, along with the few men he carried with him, for ten in all were left, to have no mistake in snaring the Secret Foe.

Myrtle had her own horse, and when the start was made, rode in advance with the captain.

The pack horses and mules followed, some two-score in number, with the cattle, sheep, and hogs, the men, and two ambulances bringing up the rear.

The wagons had been grouped together, and dummies made to represent the ambulances, while the broken-down cattle were put in conspicuous places to fool the Secret Foe, along with the used-up horses and the animals of the men left behind.

Around the base of the bluff passed the outfit, and soon after entered the foothills of the Red Range, and were lost sight of.

The sentinels were well out from the camp, and were keeping a bright lookout for their hated enemy.

But nowhere could he be seen.

When Sergeant Camp came back from seeing the outfit well on the way, he rode around to each sentinel and gave him his orders, and also told the men in camp just what they were to do when the first shadows of night should fall.

The sergeant was recovering from his wound, and did not mind the little exercise he had to take.

Until the sun set he lay about camp, and the cooks had supper ready for the men.

This was served to those in camp and carried out to the sentinels.

Wood was brought from the stream near and piled upon the fires, and by their light the men made themselves busy in spreading down their blankets, as though to go to rest.

Then they disappeared in the darkening twilight, and began to stretch out in a circle.

The sentinels were reached, and they, too, went on to widen the circle.

Upon the bluff, the two sentinels went further back, and crouched down to capture the Secret Foe, should he approach the camp that way.

At last the deadly circle was formed, and the sergeant and his men lay down to await the coming of their foe, when the trap should be sprung that got him in their power.

CHAPTER LV.

A LETTER LEFT BEHIND.

Don had fired his fifth shot and escaped never having been seen by his foe.

He was glad of this.

He did not care to have them know who he was until his own good time to do so.

Somehow, he felt that Myrtle knew that he was the deadly foe upon the trail of her captors, but he also felt that she would not make the fact known, especially as she believed that those with her were her friends.

Having fired the fifth shot, that had killed the sentinel, he again retreated to his camp.

He was very sure that the soldiers were becoming terribly afraid of him.

He was also sure that they were getting dangerously near to the Indian country, but, as before, he comforted himself

with the thought that where they could go he could follow.

Why they did not bury their dead he did not know, save that they did not wish him to have the satisfaction of knowing that his aim had been fatal.

As usual, he did not make an early start the next morning, and he started from his camp to follow the train along the ridge to the cliff, and from there see where the trail lay.

He approached the camp cautiously, for he was constantly expecting an ambush.

The train had camped on the ridge, instead of at its base, as he expected, so that had necessitated his cautious hunt for the sentinel he knew had been placed there.

That he found him is known.

Now, as he reached the deserted camp his eager eyes fell upon the newly made grave and the cedar head-board.

He dismounted and read the inscription carefully.

"There are four men here in this grave, for I only wounded the sergeant.

"And United States Cavalry, are they?"

"I cannot believe it, after what I saw them do.

"They have fooled poor Missy Myrtle, but they can't fool me—why here is a slip of paper pinned on the board close to the ground."

He took it, and, opening it, read:

"Don.

"If you are the one who is the Secret Foe of Captain Warburton and his men, I know that you are believing that they killed our people and have me a prisoner.

"But it is not the case, for they are good soldiers, and outlaws did that foul crime, Captain Warburton arriving in time to prevent their killing me, for I had fainted, and plundering the wagons.

"I have not told them that I suspect who is their deadly foe, for I did not wish to get you into trouble, and they believe it to be a wild creature they call the Man Grizzly.

"At first I did not think of you, I was so dazed by all that had occurred; but then I remembered that you had remained behind that fatal day to see if our train was followed, and I knew, too, the crack of your repeating rifle, the sound is so different from others.

"So I write you, good Don, to tell you not to kill any more innocent men, but to go on to Fort Fenton, for Captain Warburton is going there, and I will meet you, for we are all that are left.

"But I must not think, or my heart will break.

"I leave this note here for you, hoping you will get it, and do as I say.

"Good-by, Don.

"MISSY MYRTLE."

The eyes of the brave, strong negro filled with tears as he read this note, and his breast heaved with emotion.

"Poor little Missy Myrtle!

"They have deceived her, for she fainted, and so did not see what I saw.

"I cannot do as she asks me, for she don't know, does she, Terror?"

"We will follow them, Terror, and strike at them whenever we can, and we must rescue Missy Myrtle, too, and then we'll go to the fort."

The dog wagged his tail and looked wise, as though he understood just what he said.

And who can say that he did not?

From the cliff Don saw the train far away, and he discovered that it was traveling more rapidly than it had yet done.

"Something up.

"I'll have to flank around again and find out what it is.

"They have buried the dead, and they have got some plan not to get any more killed.

"I guess Missy Myrtle did not know what it was, or she would have posted me.

"But I'll be there when they camp again."

With this he went back along the ridge, not daring to ride down into the open plain, for fear of being seen, and once more began to flank the train.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE SPRINGING OF THE TRAP.

The Black Avenger had a long ride of it in flanking around, and his horses and Terror were pretty well tired when he at last discovered the noon camp of the train.

This done, he went well back in the foothills to a little valley through which ran a mountain rivulet.

He had killed a deer, knowing that he was well out of hearing of his gun by any one in the train, and he selected an ideal spot for his camp, where there was a canyon with such a narrow entrance his lariat stretched across would close it up, thus giving his horses several acres of rich pasturage within.

Dressing his deer he hung it up and then set out on foot for the train camp.

But try as he might he could get nowhere near the train.

He was too far off for a long-range shot, even with his rifle.

He flanked around behind a rise and at last reached the bluff.

But he could see a sentinel upon it, and so he had to keep in cover.

The sentinel, too, was not within range.

Don was angered. He felt that the command had gotten the best of him at this camp.

The train had come on rapidly, had gone into camp before noon, and was remaining a long time.

Something was going on against him he was sure.

As the train still stayed in camp, he was sure they would remain there for the night, especially as they had thwarted him of a shot.

Convinced of this he went back to his camp and had a combined dinner and supper.

He also took a haversack of provisions with him.

His horses were all right, Terror was given more than he could eat, and left to guard the camp, and then the negro set out to have another look at the camp, and prepared to remain in hiding as long as the train stayed there.

In making his flank movement to get around to the other side by night, Don suddenly came upon a fresh trail.

He stopped quickly and examined it.

Then he started off at a trot to try and get near enough to see who had made the trail.

This he could not do, for they had too great a start.

Then he discovered that there were no wagon tracks in the trail.

But the tracks of two ambulances were there.

Also there were the tracks of the horses, cattle, and sheep of the outfit.

Instantly Don turned back, muttering:

"They have divided the train.

"It is some plot; but I am not to be thrown off the scent."

The sun was setting now, but he hastened on, and soon after dark saw the lights of camp fires ahead.

He left the bluff now, flanked out upon the plain, and advanced with the greatest caution.

Soon he came to where he could see the camp itself, under the bluff he had longed to reach early in the afternoon.

He saw the wagons, and he saw what purported to be the ambulances.

But this he knew was a fraud.

He had seen the tracks of the ambulances leading into the foot hills.

He was looking now through his field glass and could see the cattle, horses, and wagons that had been left behind as a blind.

He noted all carefully, for the camp fires were burning brightly.

He knew it was too early for the men to turn in for the night, and yet he could not discover a human being moving about.

Long and earnestly he watched, but without seeing a man move.

A dog was tied to a wagon and got up and moved about to the end of his chain several times in a nervous manner.

About the wagons his glass showed him some dark objects that looked like men enveloped in blankets as though asleep.

"They would not lie there if they were men, fearing a shot if I saw no one else to shoot at.

"I guess it's a plan to make me believe they are camped here, while they are pushing on into the mountains.

"The Man Grizzly, Missy Myrtle said they thought I was, must have given them a big scare some time.

"Well, I'll give them another yet.

"They've left the wagons and the worn-out horses and cattle behind to fool me, while they have gone on, and the camp is deserted by them, I guess.

"I'll go on and chance it anyhow, for if it is I must be on their trail before dawn."

With this he arose from the ground and walked boldly toward the camp.

Five minutes after, like apparitions, men arose from the ground and stern came the order:

"Hands up or die!"

The trap had been sprung.

Don was taken completely by surprise.

He had walked in between two of the guards, and, as he was upright and not attempting to hide, he was seen by the others, and instantly the chain had closed in upon him from the rear.

He wheeled at the threatening command and saw that he was covered by half a dozen rifles.

Instantly he knew that death was certain if he moved, and so he called out:

"I surrenders, gemmens!"

"I is only a poor nigger!"

CHAPTER LVII.

THE UNERRING TRAILER.

It is now time to turn back to the wagon train, and see what progress had been made by Buffalo Bill in the lead, Lieutenant Basil Lee and his advance guard, and the larger commands that were surely pushing toward the Indian country in their pursuit of that mysterious officer, Captain Warburton and his men.

The fact that Captain Warburton was going so dangerously near the Indian country could not be understood by his brother officers, and many were the whispers regarding his strange conduct.

It was hoped that he was flanking around by the Red Range to in that way reach Fort Fenton, though it was several days' travel out of his way and most dangerous.

It was also hoped that he had some reason, the command knew not of, for going away from help instead of to meet it.

Still, whatever his motives, as he had gone that way he must be rescued.

The fear was felt that he might be met by the retreating braves on foot, those defeated at Rocky Pass, and be overwhelmed by them before even Buffalo Bill could overtake him to turn him back with the cheerful news that help was at hand.

The commands from the fort had left a reserve in the surrounded camp at Rocky Pass, and a good force had reached Shelter Valley and gone into camp there.

At the crossing of the stream in the plain, where the wagon train had turned off the trail to cover up their tracks, Captain Lennox had left Captain Merton with a good command, while he had pushed on to the camp where Sergeant Camp of the fugitive party under Warburton had so nearly lost his life from the unerring rifle of Don, the Black Avenger.

With his men then stationed in adjacent camps, Captain Lennox felt no fear of the consequences from an attack of the Indians in large numbers, or of rescuing Captain Warburton from them if they had corralled him.

The captain had also abiding faith in Buffalo Bill in the lead, and the fact that Lieutenant Lee and his advance guard was not far behind the scout.

So matters stood back along the trail, while the Warburton outfit was pushing on, dogged by the Black Nemesis.

Along on the trail, Buffalo Bill pushed along cautiously and slowly.

He did not care to run the risk of an ambush.

He knew that the tracks he saw of two horses and a dog were made later than had been the trail of the wagon train.

His great experience in plainscraft readily told him this.

This suggested to him that either some one or two of the train were belated, and were hastening to catch up, or there was some one dogging Captain Warburton's tracks.

The noon camp was found by the scout, and he examined it carefully.

The tracks of the two horses and the dog were near there.

Here Buffalo Bill wrote a note to Lieutenant Lee and stuck it upon a stick, making known his discovery that some one was following the Warburton train.

Again pushing on he came to where the trail of the two horses and dog branched off from the main trail.

A line on a slip of paper stuck in the crotch of a stick told that the scout was to follow the small trail, and for the officer to let a part of his force do the same.

On this trail the scout read signs like from an open book.

He found the camp of the Black Nemesis, tracked him then to the ridge, saw where he had lain on the cliff, and the bush that had shielded him was still there.

"Who and what is he?" asked the scout of himself.

He had seen enough to tell him that the two horses were on the trail of the train for a purpose.

Once more on the trail of the wagon train, Buffalo Bill quickened his pace, and he went into camp on the stream where the Black Nemesis had fired his third shot.

The scout walked about, read "signs," saw the same footprints in the sand that he had marked in the other camps, and said:

"I believe that the massacre was not complete, and that one or two escaped.

"Perhaps they were not in camp when the attack was made in Shelter Valley.

"Anyhow, whoever this, or these, may be, they are dogging the train for a purpose.

"I will push on from here and spend the night at their next halting place."

And he did so, making further discoveries.

CHAPTER LVIII.

UNRAVELING A TANGLED TRAIL.

As a means of showing my reader just what wild frontier life is, or was at the time of which I tell, I have endeavored to trace the movements of each individual and command separately, showing the movements of Captain Warburton and his men, the action of the Black Nemesis, the splendid bordercraft revealed by Buffalo Bill, and the movements of Captain Lennox and the separate forces under his leadership.

It has been seen how much depended upon the central figure, Buffalo Bill, the "star" of the combination.

But for his going to the camp in Shelter Valley the scenes and happenings of my story would have been far different.

But, discovering what he had, and with his own idea of things as they occurred, he was shaping matters in a most thorough way.

There was of course no knowledge on his part of the Black Nemesis, though he had become convinced that there was an avenger upon the trail of Captain Warburton's command, from some reason or other, and the tracks of two horses led him to believe that there were two men instead of one.

But this was natural, as he suspected another rider on the negro's pack horse.

The fact of a dog's tracks being seen led him to consider the more that the followers of the Warburton outfit were survivors of the wagon train massacre.

Having read the "signs" from his experience in border life up to the cliff where the Black Nemesis had fired the third shot, Buffalo Bill rode around and down to the train camp, leaving on the cliff a note and another in the deserted encampment, giving his ideas up to that time to Lieutenant Lee, who was following with the two scouts, Maddern and Belt, most able advisers.

From the cliff the scout took the trail again of the two horses and dog.

He wanted to see their course and could very readily go back to the wagon trail.

By doing this he came to the little camp in the timber, followed the single tracks of a booted foot to the ravine and up it to where the Nemesis had lain concealed and took the long shot at the camp there in the open plain.

Here Buffalo Bill found a single shell of a cartridge that had been fired.

He had found one also on the cliff.

He had ridden up the ravine and now he continued on out upon the plain to the open camp.

But he found no graves, and wondered at it, considering that he felt sure that an avenger was following the train.

On he went, with a line left for Lieutenant Lee in the camp, telling about the empty shell he had found.

His next halt was on the ridge.

He was still on the trail of the avenger, went to his camp, and not able to see the footprints from there in the hard soil, had to guess at the ridge being his point of destination.

Riding along the ridge his eyes fell upon the cedar headboard and the grave in which lay four bodies.

Stones had been put upon the grave to keep the coyotes from digging up the bodies.

Here the scout went into camp to consider.

He had found in the grave something decidedly tangible.

He was beginning to unravel the tangled trail.

Having left his horse down on the meadow to feed and rest, Buffalo Bill returned to the ridge to look about him thoroughly.

He went back along the ridge, found where the sentinel had been placed, and killed, and further on picked up another empty shell.

Then he returned to the grave and again read what was very cleverly cut into the cedar headboard.

"Four men of Troop B, —th Regiment, U. S. Cavalry," he muttered. Captain Warburton's troop and regiment.

"And the four are in this grave.

"Killed in camps from Shelter Valley to this spot.

"I have three of the four shells that held the fatal cartridges.

"Who is the fatal dead shot but one of the train who survived the massacre?"

"And the bodies were brought this far, not to let him see that his work was deadly.

"But here they buried them.

"Can it be that they killed the man?"

"I guess not, or they would not have found his camp and the horses I would have run upon, unless the second one got away.

"But I doubt there being but one man and the dog, for I have seen but the one human track about the lone camps of the avenger.

"Well, I will leave another note for Lieutenant Lee, and the next camp will tell if the avenger met his fate here or not, and which the burial of his victims would indicate.

"I am catching up with the train, and should overhaul them at their noon camp to-morrow, camping in their noon camp of to-day myself to-night.

"I'll have my dinner and light out, and leave Lieutenant Lee to have these

men dug up, and thus recognize just who they are."

With this Buffalo Bill descended the ridge to where his horse was feeding, built a fire, and after having his dinner started once more upon the trail.

He had not gone very far before he was sure that the avenger was still on the trail, for the tracks of the horses and dog showed that they were following the train, not being taken along with it.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE SCOUT'S FIND.

Buffalo Bill again stuck to the trail of the avenger, instead of that of the train.

He had seen that the train had moved more rapidly from the last camp, than before on the march, and he knew that there was some cause for this.

He accordingly quickened his pace.

Still following the trail of the avenger, early in the afternoon he went along over an open plain, with the mountains growing nearer and nearer in the distance.

He knew these mountains as the Red Range, and was sure that Captain Warburton, if going to Fort Fenton by the roundabout way he had chosen, would leave the range on his left hand; running along their base until he came to a river, which he would follow down to the military post.

It was upon this stream that Fort Fenton was situated, but all of a hundred and fifty miles from the Red Range.

If Captain Warburton did not follow along at the base of the Red Range, but turned into the mountains, the scout knew that he would be going direct into the Indian country.

As he drew near a barren ridge that ran from the foothills out into the plain for some miles, the scout saw that the wagon train continued straight on, while the tracks of the two horses and the dog led back toward some timber.

He followed the latter.

It led him for a couple of miles to where there were timbered hills, a valley, and a stream.

Continuing on, he came upon a narrow canyon opening upon the valley, and out of it was flowing a small rivulet, to mingle with the large stream in the valley.

The tracks led into this valley.

But suddenly the scout halted.

His way was challenged, and by a loud bark, while Terror stood in the mouth of the canyon as a sentinel.

Looking in, the scout saw a camp, with a saddle and pack saddle swung across a bent-down sapling.

Within the canyon were two fine horses, one a jet black stallion.

Terror had ceased to bark, but was guarding the entrance to the canyon, and watching the scout.

Buffalo Bill was not afraid of anything, especially a dog.

But he did not wish to shoot the dog, and, feeling sure that his master was away from camp, he decided to make no attempt to investigate further.

He saw a lariat stretched twice across the canyon, to keep the horses within.

At once he took out his notebook and pencil and wrote:

"I have been following you from Shelter Valley.

"Have observed your work along the trail, up to the grave of four soldiers.

"I am also on the trail of Captain Warburton, and would like to join forces with you, so if you return to your camp await my return, for I now go to find the camp of the soldiers, and suspect that you have also gone there, to hunt another victim, for I take you to be avenging some wrong.

"W. F. CODY, (BUFFALO BILL)

"Chief of Scouts, U. S. Army.

"For Department of Plains."

This note Buffalo Bill pinned upon the lariat, Terror merely growling a threat not to venture within the canyon.

Anticipating his return there, and wishing to relieve his horse of all extra

weight, the scout stripped off his roll of blankets, camp equipments, and saddlebags, hanging them across the lariat.

Then he set out, greatly to the joy of Terror, who looked at the things left with marked suspicion.

Believing that the avenger would be on the bluff at the end of the ridge, for the train must have camped on the plain near, and unable to track him on foot, Buffalo Bill decided to go that way.

He was sure that he could see well out upon the plain from the bluff, which he had observed far back ended abruptly, yet was not very high.

He had also seen that it was devoid of trees, while a little stream he had crossed came from that way, doubtless flowing out of the ridge, would be just where the train would camp.

He had some hours yet until nightfall, and he was certain that if the train was not there, he could discover it from the bluff.

That it was still there he was led to believe from having found the avenger's camp only a couple of miles or so away from the bluff.

Among the ridge, therefore, Buffalo Bill rode, and at last leaving the timber, he came out into the barren space.

He had not yet seen the avenger, but, suddenly, he saw smoke rising ahead, over the bluff.

Riding cautiously on, Buffalo Bill suddenly reined in his horse on the very edge of the bluff at the startling sight before him.

It was a sight to appall, as well as to surprise and wonder at.

The bluff was not over thirty feet high, and where a man could scramble down it here and there, it would be a bold one, indeed, who would make the attempt on horseback.

The sight that met the vision of the scout was a camp of half a score of men.

There were two wagons, stripped of their covers, and hauled up near to each other, the poles were carried aloft, and the ends were some eight feet apart.

From the end of each was stretched a pole unbolted from another wagon, and firmly tied there, thus forming a cross beam.

And this arrangement was to be used as a gallows for a man whom Buffalo Bill saw standing beneath, a lariat about his neck, his hands tied behind his back, while four of the group grasped the other end, ready to drag him into the air at the command of their leader.

CHAPTER LX.

UNDER SUSPICION.

When Don, the Black Avenger, saw that he was trapped, he was too cool-headed a man to throw his life away by attempting flight or resistance.

He thought of Myrtle in the hands of the murderers of her parents, and quick as a flash he determined to surrender and play a part, in his hope to rescue her.

So at once he threw his hands above his head and said meekly the words that uttered the challenge.

Sergeant Camp was one of the men nearest to him as the negro's manner and words deceived him, for he said:

"All right, nigger, I'll just take that belt of arms and rifle you carry, and then we can talk."

"Yes, massa," replied Don, speaking in a strong darkey dialect, which at other times he never used.

"Here dey is, sah."

"I'll take them, don't you touch them."

"Sartin not, sah."

Don was thus disarmed and led to the camp fire, where all the men now assembled to have a look at him.

"Well, who are you?"

"A poor niggah, sah."

"Where are you from?"

"Texas, sah."

"What is your name?"

"Don, sah."

"How is it you wear such a gorgeous Mexican outfit and carry such fine weapons?"

"Dey was given to me, sah, by my massa."

"You see, sah, dat dere was a bad Mexican outlaw kilt, and I got his clothes, sah."

"Who was your master?"

"Massa Donald Ellis of Texas, sah."

"Hain't yer seen him, fer I got lost, and has been following ther trail of der waggins fer days, sah, and I is mighty nigh played out, and I eat my last mouthful dis mornin' sah."

"Are you on foot?"

"Yes, sah."

"And have you been following the trail?"

"Yes, sah."

"Where from?"

"A walley, sah, where massa must hev had a jout with Inguns, for there was a number of graves dere."

"How did you get lost?"

"I were a huntin' in de rear, sah, an' my horse got away from me, so I had ter walk."

"Massa must hev been mighty skeert of Inguns, or thoughted they hed kilt me, or he'd never gone on an' left me behind."

"Hes yer seen 'em, sah?"

"Yes, they have gone on, and we are to follow as soon as your case is attended to."

"Yes, sah. I is mighty glad, sah."

"Have you been the one who has been killing a man in our band at every camp we have made?"

Don did not flinch. He simply rolled his eyes and said:

"Me killin' gemmans, sah."

"Have you been alone on the trail?"

"Yes, sah."

"Somebody has been creeping up and shooting into our camp."

"Dat was bad."

"I jist seen yer camp fires, and were a walkin' fer 'em, sah, when yer jump me."

"My! but wasn't I skeered!"

"He was not the man, sergeant," said one of the men.

"I guess not."

"But if not, who was?" and again turning to Don the sergeant continued:

"Did you see no one else upon the trail as you came along?"

Remembering that Myrtle had said in her letter that the men thought that their secret foe was one they called the Man Grizzly, Don at once applied it to his case.

He had observed that the men had changed their uniforms for the new clothes that he knew to have been in the train.

He also recognized the faces he had seen at the massacre camp, and again upon the trail several times.

So he replied:

"Yes, sah, I seen a man on de trail, but he look more like a white bear dan a human."

"Ah! When did you see him?"

"I seen him several times, sah."

"What was he doing?"

"He say he hev some big game ter shoot."

"Well?"

"He come on ahead of me—"

"He was mounted then?"

"Yes, sah, he have fine horse."

"And you saw him several times?"

"Yes, sah."

"What else did he tell you?"

"He say he done kilt some game."

"Did he tell you who?"

"No, sah."

"Nigger?"

"Yes, sah."

"I believe you are lying?"

"Lordy, massa! I-b'long to de church—I can't tell a lie!" exclaimed Don in a tone of horror.

"I am sure that you did see this Man Grizzly, and I know that he must have told you something about us, and his motive for firing upon our camp."

"In fact, I am very sure, play your part well though you do, that you have come into our camp as the Man Grizzly's spy."

"Lordy, masse! I'se a 'onest nigger, I is!"

"I don't doubt your story about being lost, and following on after us; but I do know that you have met the Man Grizzly from your own confession, and a captive we have has not even spoken of you."

"You have got far more sense than you pretend, for I never seen a finer face of intelligence in a negro."

"You have met the Man Grizzly, and you are allied with him against us, and, though he has done the killing, you are the spy, so I shall make you a prisoner and keep you close, so you can tell me what I am determined to know."

"Come, men, a guard must be set at once, or the Man Grizzly will be again sending a death shot into our camp," and four men at once scattered to posts of duty, while the sergeant saw to it that Don was securely bound.

CHAPTER LXI.

BUFFALO BILL HAS HIS WAY.

The morning dawned in the camp under the bluff to find Don a prisoner, bound hand and foot.

He had met his fate calmly, wondering what the morrow would bring to him.

He felt more his captivity on account of being unable to aid Myrtle's escape, yet trusted that he would be taken to her.

Then, too, he regretted the ending of his revenge through his capture.

Having started to play the part he had made up his mind to stick to it.

The guards at dawn came in, even from the bluff, and the men all took a good look at the negro.

They were certainly impressed with his splendid physique, his manly, intelligent face, and look of utter fearlessness.

The sergeant seemed in no hurry to move.

Breakfast was gotten, and then the men went apart from the negro and had a long talk together.

It was expected that the Man Grizzly would appear the next night.

He would come to claim another victim surely, and perhaps attempt the rescue of his ally, the negro.

So they decided, for they were surely convinced that the negro had told the truth, as far as the Man Grizzly being the avenger, though they felt equally certain that he was his ally.

The sergeant had decided, therefore, to spend another night in the camp where they were, and lay another trap for the capture of the Man Grizzly.

It would also give the captain a chance to reach his destination, and by staying where they were, give the man they believed to be still on their track the idea that the whole train was encamped there.

The sergeant had a talk alone with the negro captive, but he could learn nothing from him any more than he had already told him.

At dinner time the men had worked themselves into an ugly mood against the negro.

They wanted him off their hands, to be put out of the way.

With this feeling, they told the sergeant what they wished, and what was no more or less than that the negro should be hanged.

Sergeant Camp at first urged against it, but they reasoned that he would go into camp and let their fair young captive know the truth, for they had begun to believe that the negro really knew all, having been told by the Man Grizzly.

Against such argument the sergeant had little to say, and at last he yielded to the demand that the negro should be hanged.

This decided upon, the men eagerly set to work to prepare for the execution of the negro.

Sergeant Camp went to him, and

shirking the responsibility, he told the prisoner that the men demanded his life.

Don did not flinch. He merely said:

"Dere's but one time to die, boss, and we has all got to go dat way."

"I guesses I kin die, as many another man has done."

"I hain't over scary."

"You are a plucky one."

"But the men are going to hang you, and you see they are now making a gallows out of wagon poles, so you'll have just about half an hour to live."

"All right, boss, I'm ready, if I has got to go," was the plucky response.

The sergeant walked away, looked at the impromptu gallows, gave advice about strengthening it with guy ropes, and then called to two of the men to bring the negro.

Don arose, and, his feet being set free, he walked boldly between the men.

His hat was taken off, also his coat, his arms were pinioned behind his back.

Then his cavalry boots were drawn off, and he stood beneath the gallows, with the noose of a lariat about his neck.

The crossbeam and the lariat had been greased, to have it run easily, and then came the sergeant, who said:

"Have you said your prayers, nigger?"

"That is none of your affair."

"Do your murderous work, and do it quickly, for I'll never beg for mercy—I'd as soon ask a coyote."

The deep voice of the negro, his manner of speaking, now fairly startled the men, and one called out:

"I do believe he is the Man Grizzly himself, pards."

This seemed to impress others, and, seeing it, even in that awful moment, the negro laughed.

"String him up, men!" shouted the sergeant.

But they were the last words he ever uttered, for suddenly a report rang out, and a bullet crashed through his brain.

The men were astounded, and turned in terror as their leader fell dead.

They beheld a startling, thrilling picture.

There on the bluff, mounted upon his black horse, sat Buffalo Bill, gazing at the would-be murderers of the Black Avenger.

Only an instant did horse and rider appear motionless, like an apparition upon the heights; then all saw him ride down the perilous slope and dash into their midst.

The negro saw and recognized the splendid horseman whom he had seen that night in the camp of the train in Shelter Valley.

The men knew who it was, but not a hand was raised against him.

"Men, I need not introduce myself, more than to say that I shall kill the one who attempts to hang that man, as I killed your leader."

"This is no time for words, but actions, and I have followed you to say that Captain Warburton is going directly into a large trap set by Indians for him, while several hundred soldiers are on his trail, coming to rescue him."

"Go ahead with all speed from here and overtake him, and the rest of the outfit, and turn him back before it is too late, while I return at once and hasten Captain Lennox and his men on to save him, should the redskins pursue."

"Mount your horses and be off, for I will see to this negro and the body of your sergeant."

Buffalo Bill spoke rapidly, without a pause, and sternly and commandingly, as well.

The men were dazed by his coming, not a thought of resisting him was in their minds, and they were but too glad to get away.

They had but one desire—to take advantage of Buffalo Bill's words to go on and join Captain Warburton and warn him, not of danger from the Indians, but from the soldiers that were on their trail.

Quickly they mounted, and quickly they were off, leaving Buffalo Bill standing by the Black Avenger.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE MAN GRIZZLY.

"Well, pard, who are you?" and Buffalo Bill turned to Don, cut his bonds, took the rope from about his neck, and gazed upon him with real admiration, for he had heard his last words and seen his brave bearing in the face of death.

"My name is Don, sir. I belonged to the train of Mr. Donald Ellis, being the last survivor, save one, Missy Myrtle, that those fellows have a prisoner, for all the rest were murdered in the camp in Shelter Valley."

"Can this be true?" asked Buffalo Bill with utter amazement.

"Yes, sir, though the butchers there wore uniforms, sir, and the captain and the rest of the outfit have gone on ahead, and Missy Myrtle is a prisoner with them. All the family but her were killed."

"And you escaped the massacre?"

"Yes, sir, I was not in the camp, but got to the ridge in time to see the horrible butchery."

"And I saw you, sir, go to the camp and ride away. I took their trail, for they ran off as soon as you left. I have followed them and been avenging my people all along the way."

"My poor fellow, you are a noble and brave man, and I am with you heart and hand in this sacred duty you have entered upon."

"It is hard to believe those villains are United States soldiers, but they have turned outlaws, so I know why they fled."

"I was sent, and a large force is behind me, to rescue them, and I have suspected all along that they were flying from aid."

"Now I know it."

"I shot that sergeant because he held a revolver in his hand, as he stood up in the wagon, and I believed he intended to use it, even though they were dragging you into the air."

"I played the game I did, feeling my weakness, and hoping to frighten them off, for I was sure they did not wish to be taken, or care to have their captain caught, and thus would be glad to get away to warn him."

"But, do you take my horse and go to your camp, for I have been there, and bring your animals and my traps left there."

"I will remain in this camp, and I do not believe it will be long before the advance guard will be along. Then we can push on after those fellows, who, with those you have killed, and the sergeant here, do not number as many as we will."

"They are just sixteen, all told, sir, now."

"And with Lieutenant Lee are two scouts, a sergeant, corporal, and fourteen men, so, including you and I, we will have twenty-one, all told, but one man must be sent back to hurry on the other command, for we may need them on account of the Indians."

"As it is, I will ride back over the trail while you go to your camp, to meet the lieutenant and start back the best-mounted man for Captain Lennox."

A few minutes after, mounted upon one of the horses the men had left, Don started to his camp, while Buffalo Bill, leaping into his saddle, rode rapidly back over the trail to meet the lieutenant.

He had ridden several miles when he suddenly drew rein, for he heard firing ahead of him.

"Ah! the lieutenant has run upon some of those dismounted redskins retreating to their village," he cried, and on he dashed at full speed.

The nature of the ground was such that he approached unseen or unheard, to dash upon a man at bay, crouching down in a ravine, and fighting off a dozen redskins who had him surrounded.

With a yell Buffalo Bill leveled his repeating rifle and rapidly the shots streamed out, and one, two, three Indians fell, while the others, believing the cavalry upon them, fled in dismay.

"You have saved me a second time, sir."

The speaker sprang out of the ravine,

and it was the Man Grizzly that stood before the scout.

"I am glad to have been of service to you, sir," and Buffalo Bill gazed fixedly into the face of the man, and was struck by its striking look of intelligence and courage, though it was haunted by an expression of sadness that was marked.

"Are you trailing these Indians, sir?" he asked the scout.

"No, I am trailing a wagon train, and these redskins are some of a force that met the troopers from Fort Fenton several days ago, and were badly whipped."

"I am also trailing that wagon train, but I have been on foot since my horse was killed, as you know, and have had only game to live upon, for I have run out of provisions, and necessarily my progress was slow."

"Do you belong to that train?"

"Oh, no; in fact, the whole party were murdered, and it is with the murderers in charge of the train that I have to deal, for several months ago I was coming into this country with a party of friends, nine of us, all told, and soldiers, whom we looked to for aid, shot them down and robbed us."

"I alone escaped, being off on a hunt."

"I at once determined to seek revenge, to shoot as many of that band as they had killed comrades of mine."

"I had my horse, weapons, and we had cached some provisions, blankets, and bearskins."

"I went there and fitted myself out, wearing this robe and head dress, more to appear like a wild man than anything else."

"Then I was taken ill, and for weeks was confined to my camp."

"At last I set out on my trail of revenge, and these notches on the butt of my rifle show that I have killed four of that band."

"When you aided me so well, at the risk of your life, I supposed you would dash away in flight, and so I ran for the canyon."

"As you did not go at once, I climbed to the cliff to try and aid you."

"When I saw you in the Shelter Valley camp, why did you run?"

"I believed that you were my uniformed foes, for I did not hear what you said to me; but, later, I felt that I was wrong and that I had again met you, but then I was far away."

"Then I started upon the trail of the wagon train, for I knew that some band had murdered the poor gold hunters, as they had my party. I am now tracking them to their retreat, which is here in these mountains."

"Indeed? Well, we will go together, for I am on the same trail. I just left another avenger on their track, a negro, one of the wagon-train party. The murderers have a young girl captive he tells me."

"And more: the advance guard of a large force of soldiers is not far from here. I was just going to meet them, so we will stick to the trail of these murderers until we wipe them out—ah! there they come now!"

As Buffalo Bill spoke Scouts Maddern and Belt came in sight.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE CAPTAIN'S DOUBLE.

When the two scouts came up, Buffalo Bill quickly informed them of what had happened, and Belt was at once dispatched back to Lieutenant Lee, to ask him to send his best-mounted man to Captain Lennox with all speed, he in turn to send a courier to Captain Merton, in the ford camp, and again a man was to be dispatched to Shelter Valley, and thence to the Rocky Pass force, that all might push forward toward the Red Range.

Away dashed Belt, and, leaving the soldiers to bury the dead Indians when they came up, Buffalo Bill, Maddern, and the Man Grizzly, who gave his name as Martin Sanford, rode on to the camp at the bluff.

Don had already arrived there, and he

gazed at the Man Grizzly with wonder, but at once set to work getting supper.

He had ample supplies, and he cooked for all, as the soldiers must soon be up, and Buffalo Bill was anxious to push ahead even in the night, for the new moon would last them up to twelve o'clock, and the fugitives would not expect pursuit until the next day.

"We can catch them to-night, sir," declared Don.

"If we don't lose their trail, for they may branch off to their retreat, which our friend says is in the Red Range, though he does not know where."

"We can track them wherever they go, sir, right through the night, for Terror there will take their scent and never leave it."

Buffalo Bill gave a shout to express his joy at this news, and said:

"We will surely catch them now! Ah, here comes Lieutenant Lee."

That officer came up at a gallop, followed by his men. He was soon told the whole story by Buffalo Bill, and met the two avengers.

"We will rest here half an hour, Cody, and then push on. Belt will reach Captain Lennox by midnight, for, as he was light weight, I sent him the whole run."

"With a fresh horse, he can make the ford and Shelter Valley camp before dawn, and a courier can go on from there for the last reserve, for he told me that you feared we would have a thousand warriors upon us before we got out of this country."

"I do fear it, sir, for those braves who had the Man Grizzly corralled will reach their village by daybreak. They are sure that the force of troopers who defeated them at Rocky Pass have followed them, and they will seek revenge; so our plan is to capture that deserter band and start on our retreat with all speed."

"You are right. But it distresses me greatly to feel that Warburton has become what he has, and Camp, too, and the men."

"It is, indeed, a cruel blow to the army, sir, but we will move whenever you say the word, for our four-footed trailer there, Terror, will find those fellows for us, never fear."

Half an hour after the little command was in the saddle, the sergeant, corporal, and fourteen men following their officer, who rode behind Maddern and the Man Grizzly, while Buffalo Bill and Don led, the latter holding Terror by a lariat, after he had put him upon the trail of the fugitives.

Two hours passed, and still the dog went on with unerring instinct.

Midnight came, and a rest of half an hour was taken; then Terror once more took up the scent.

The timber was dark, the mountain passes were black in gloom, but, silently, the dog trailer went on, tugging at the lariat. He seemed never to tire, and the horses were not spared.

Buffalo Bill was sure that they were traveling two miles to the fugitives' one.

He felt, too, that those he had sent on would continue their flight until they overtook their captain, who would necessarily travel very slow, heavily freighted as were the ambulances and pack animals, and delayed here and there by the rough trails.

Several times they had come to places where only manual help could have gotten the ambulances and heavily laden horses down. Even the pursuers themselves had to dismount at such places.

Through the night the pursuit was kept up. Buffalo Bill knew that they had branched away from the base of the Red Range, and were pushing into the mountain.

Just before dawn they espied a light ahead. It was upon a hill, on one side of which dashed a mountain torrent; the other was a valley.

Buffalo Bill, Don, and Martin Sanford went ahead on foot to reconnoitre.

In half an hour they returned.

"It is a stockade fort, sir, but we can scale the walls and thus enter. It is an

acre in size, and once within we can hold it, for we are twenty-one, and they cannot do more than double us in numbers."

"You know best, Cody, and delay is dangerous, as the Indians will be upon us," answered Lieutenant Lee.

On foot, then, the little band crept forward; the stockade wall was reached, and upon the shoulders of men grouped together Buffalo Bill climbed up, went over, and made a lariat fast.

Up this the others followed, and in the gray dawn they all stood in the enclosure.

The fugitives had evidently all arrived but a few hours before, and were sound asleep.

The ambulances were there, and the men had thrown themselves down to rest.

"You demand the surrender, Cody, as soon as we can see a little better," ordered the lieutenant.

The men were soon placed, and in thunder tones Buffalo Bill shouted:

"Captain Warburton, we hold you fort, and I call upon you and your men to surrender, in the name of the United States Army, or no mercy will be shown you!"

Consternation ruled supreme at once; but, then came a cheer from a cabin near, then shouts, orders, and the rapid rattle of revolvers at close quarters.

It was a complete surprise; and more—a complete victory!

Half a dozen soldiers fell, as many more were wounded.

Lieutenant Lee had two slight wounds, Don had a sabre cut from the leader, whom he killed, and there came cries for quarter from the few renegades who were left.

The daylight revealed a strange sight in that little fort, for, suddenly, out of a large cabin opened by Buffalo Bill came a tall, handsome man, followed by a score of others, who cheered wildly.

Springing toward the one in advance, Lieutenant Lee cried:

"Why, you are Wallace Warburton, or his double."

"No, Lee, there is my double, lying dead—my own brother. I am, in truth, the real Wallace Warburton."

"My brother always hated me. He went to the bad, and came out here to ruin me, while he led the life of an outlaw."

"He entrapped me and my men, for we suspected no treachery from white men, and, taking our uniforms, they have masqueraded in them, while they held us close prisoners here in this fastness."

But he returned, and boldly told me that he had murdered our uncle, Donald Ellis, and his whole outfit, save his little daughter, who is a captive here—there she is now talking to that large negro—the man I saw kill my brother. But, who is that splendid-looking man there, and whom I saw from our prison fighting like a very devil?"

"It is Buffalo Bill, to whom we owe our success," was the answer.

"He is the man who solved their secret for us, of outlaws being in the United States uniform."

"Come, I want you to meet him, for no nobler, truer man ever lived," and the two officers now approached Buffalo Bill, who was talking with Myrtle, who had gone to seek him with Don.

And in Captain Wallace Warburton Myrtle found an uncle to love, and smiles shone through her tears, as she said:

"I've got you left, and Don."

CHAPTER LXIV.

CONCLUSION.

The whole story was told, how Walter Warburton had impersonated his brother Wallace, and an outlaw had done the same with Sergeant Camp, to give the idea that an officer and his men had deserted and had become a band of outlaws.

The outlaw captain had murdered the party of Martin Sanford, as has been told, and he knew that his uncle, Donald Ellis, had found gold in that country,

and was proceeding there to work his mine, bringing his family and servants with him, so he had determined to wipe out the party, and thus gaining the map of how to reach the mine, get all for himself.

As Maddern had seen a party of Indians skulking about, and they had been on friendly terms with the outlaws, it was determined to corral the cattle and horses in the fort, and not attempt to leave with so small a force, while Buffalo Bill and Don were to start to meet Captain Lennox and pilot the command on.

This was done, the scout and Don starting on two fine horses found in the fort, while Captain Warburton, refusing to take the command his rank would give him, put his men under Lieutenant Lee, thus increasing the strength to man the fort to over thirty fighters.

The next morning, when Buffalo Bill and Don came up with Captain Lennox and his men, they found the fort besieged by several hundred Indians, and more coming.

But, more soldiers were also coming. Captain Merton and his men arrived at noon, while by night the force from Shelter Valley put in an appearance, and reported that the last reserve from Rocky Pass would arrive by the next morning.

The Indians had gathered fifteen hundred strong, and were still increasing, so Captain Lennox at once determined to give battle, opening with his artillery, pressing forward with his mounted infantry, and charging with his cavalry.

The Indians fought stubbornly, but were beaten back at every point, and when their scouts reported more soldiers hastening forward, the reserve from Rocky Pass, the redskins broke and fled, feeling sure that an attack was to be made upon their village, fifty miles away.

The retreat was at once begun by Captain Lennox, carrying his dead and wounded and the hundreds of horses and cattle and other live stock found in the outlaw fort.

The march was a slow one, but when the wagons were reached, they aided greatly in carrying the booty, and there the dead were buried.

After a march of four days, passing Shelter Valley camp purposely at night, on account of Myrtle, the victorious command reached Fort Fenton.

There Buffalo Bill was as much lauded as a hero, as Myrtle was as a heroine. She at once became the Fair Maid of the Fort, and was given a home in Colonel Waring's quarters, where the colonel's beautiful daughter adopted her.

Later on Myrtle gained possession of her father's gold mine, for Don knew just where it was, he having been the companion of Mr. Ellis in his gold hunt. The young girl thus "struck it rich," and when she reached the age of eighteen was very glad to turn the management of her affairs and care of herself over to Captain Basil Lee, as the dashing young officer had become.

With the telling that Buffalo Bill still lives, a man of wealth, world renowned, honored by all, and still the same noble fellow he was in the days when he wore the buckskin, my long pen trail comes to and end.

THE END.

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